A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF GENDER ROLE IDENTITY AND

RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION IN ADULTS RAISED

IN EQUAL PARENTING HOUSEHOLDS

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ABSTRACT

This multi-method dissertation study focused on the experiences of adults who were raised in households where cohabitating male and female parents shared parenting tasks equally or near-equally, dividing childcare based on criteria other than gender. An online survey of 182 females and 52 males over 18 years of age was utilized to examine the relative frequency of shared parenting in the survey sample, to identify subjects who experienced the highest degree of shared parenting for more in depth, qualitative study, and to identify relevant demographic factors such as age and race of those adults who experienced shared parenting as children. Survey data also provided information on the degree of sharing of various childcare tasks at different ages of children, and on the frequency of male and female parents working outside the home at various ages of their children. Ten interview participants were then chosen for qualitative study based on having experienced a high level of shared parenting and their current relationship status. They participated in semi-structured interviews focused on their respective experiences of their parents' sharing of childcare and on the impact of this parenting style on each subject's later gender role identity and relationship satisfaction. Interviews were transcribed verbatim based on the methodology described by McCracken (1988), and common themes were identified. To provide corroborative quantitative data related to gender role identity and relationships satisfaction, interview subjects were also given the Bem Sex Role Inventory and Dyadic Adjustment Scale-7. Scores were measured against the normed samples for these instruments. Adult children of equally parenting partners interviewed for qualitative study were found to have flexible gender role identities and high relationship satisfaction. Survey findings demonstrated that those under forty years

of age were twice as likely to have experienced shared parenting, but that shared

parenting has not increased in proportion to the increases in mothers in the workforce.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since the second-wave feminist movement of the 1970s, family structures have

been altered by a variety of cultural phenomena, including the entry of large numbers of

women into the workforce. Women's choices have expanded, as the range of socially

acceptable women's roles have widened, and many women have chosen to pursue

careers, in addition to focusing on home and family. However, it has been widely

commented that this expansion of opportunity left women burdened by a "second shift,"

as they continued to take on the majority of responsibility within the home. A literature

review commissioned by the National Center on Fathers and Families demonstrates that

on the whole, an increase in women's time in employment outside the home has not

resulted in a commensurate increase in men's time spent at home and in family-related

tasks, particularly childrearing (Arendell, 1997).

While it is widely believed that contemporary men spend more time at childcare,

these increases are minor, particularly when compared with the demands women have

taken on outside the home (Perry-Jenkins, 1993). It is clear that shared parenting has not

caught up with the sharing of outside employment and breadwinning. While there are

many possible explanations (e.g., gender role stereotypes and expectations, men's

unwillingness to let go of a privileged status, and systemic barriers within the workplace,

such as lack of childcare, workday flexibility, and leave time), it is not within the scope

of this study to address the obstacles to shared parenting. Instead, it focuses on a small

but increasing proportion of committed couples who have consciously chosen the path of shared parenting (also referred to as co-parenting, equally shared parenting, equal parenting, and parental role-sharing).

While the term "shared parenting" has also been used to describe divorced parents and other family arrangements, within the context of this paper, it refers specifically to married or cohabitating parents in stable, long-term partnerships who have chosen to divide work outside and inside the home in ways other than those related to gender roles. Some of these parents have attempted to spend equal time outside the home, and to split up tasks within the home evenly. Others have split up tasks along the lines of personal preference or talent. One may enjoy landscaping, while the other doesn't mind laundry; one might enjoy attending playgroups with other parents, while the other may be an early riser who gets the children up and ready for the day.

While shared or equal parenting has been defined primarily by time spent at childcare (Ehrenberg et al., 2001; Ehrensaft, 1990), more recent work has attempted to focus on its psychological dimensions, including parents' support of each other, egalitarian gender attitudes, and quality of each parent's relationship with children (Ehrenberg, 2001). Equal time may not necessarily capture the essence of shared parenting (Ehrenberg, 2001). In some cases, one parent may work 60-hour weeks early in her career, and then take time off while the other starts his own business. These are parents who have chosen to eliminate the "second shift" by giving each parent equal responsibility for work and home. How these negotiations are made varies widely from couple to couple, but the common denominator is that gender is not the major factor in organizing family roles.

Men and women are considered equally capable, qualified, and potentially desirous of public and private sphere activities, and both spheres are equally valued.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although many studies have documented the lack of proportionate increase by

fathers in childrearing, few investigations have touched on the functioning of those

families in which fathers are equally involved. Even those few studies that have analyzed

samples of shared parenting couples have defined "egalitarian" parents as those who split

childrearing and/or domestic labor by a male-to-female ration of up to 65-to-35 percent

(Ehrensaft, 1987; Fish, New, & Van Cleave, 1992). Despite a lack of empirical study of

couples engaged in shared parenting, there has been a great deal of theorizing over the

last thirty to forty years within both the feminist and, more recently, masculinist

psychoanalytic literatures exploring the primacy of female parenting and its implications

for gender development.

Theorists like Chodorow and Dinnerstein and, more recently, Pollack, Levant, and

Pleck, have suggested that strongly dichotomized gender roles, whereby women are

assigned characteristics of connection and interdependence and men of independence and

separateness, arise not primarily from biological differences, or even the natural

dynamics of the oedipal triangle in the family, but rather from the interplay between

oedipal (and earlier) dynamics within the family and primary female mothering, a

socially mediated practice. They argue that the social system that promotes female

mothering perpetuates itself through continued female parenting. As daughters identify

with the caregiver role and sons with the provider role, unequal parenting is doomed to

repeat itself. Despite other dramatic changes in the structure of families since the 1970s, most children, including children in single-parent homes, still experience primary female mothering, influencing girls to identify with the caregiver role, and boys to develop in opposition to it.

The terms "primary female parenting," and "female parenting" are used throughout this paper, as most of the theoretical literature frames the issue in terms of the primary role females play in parenting. It is important to note, however, that these terms are not meant to blame women for the challenges primary female parenting presents, nor to disparage the involvement of mothers in childrearing. It would be equally accurate, and descriptive of the same phenomenon, to refer to "secondary male parenting," "limited-involvement male parenting," or, when applicable, "absent male parenting." It is the general premise of this study that individuals reared in a shared-parenting paradigm can allow us to assess whether co-primary fathers would enhance gender development and later relationship satisfaction. It does not assume that mothers should be less invested or involved in parenting.

While many writers have theorized about the consequences of primary female parenting, little empirical study has been undertaken to test their hypotheses. The phenomenon of equally shared parenting permits comparison of children who experience primary female mothering with those who experience co-parenting. While related areas of study have produced a preponderance of empirical evidence suggesting benefits to shared parenting for offspring and for parents themselves (for example, studies on the positive effects of father involvement on children, and of nontraditional gender presentation in parents as a predictor of father involvement and equal parenting), the

specific relationship between equal parenting and gender identity *in offspring*, has been largely ignored. Few studies have focused on the recipients of equal parenting. Another issue raised by theorists over the past thirty years, the ramifications of gender role dichotomization in heterosexual marriages and relationships, has received even less attention, particularly with regard to how the children of equal parenting, as opposed to the children of primary female parenting, experience later relationships. This study seeks to gather qualitative data on grown children who experienced shared parenting in order to explore the relationship of shared parenting to gender role development and relationship satisfaction later in life. I hope to flesh out our notions of what shared parenting entails, and how it is experienced in relationship to gender identity, so that future empirical research on larger samples can test the hypotheses generated by this qualitative study.

This study will examine shared parenting as it pertains to the development of gender role identity. Perry and Bussey (1984) define "gender-role development" as "the process whereby children come to acquire the behaviors, attitudes, interests, emotional reactions, and motives that are culturally defined as appropriate for members of their sex" (p. 262). *Gender role* refers to the behaviors, attitudes, values and beliefs that a particular culture considers normative for ones biological sex. Gender role is the gender presentation one develops through gender role development. *Gender role identity* refers to "a person's understanding and acceptance of gender roles. In other words it is how an individual adapts the prescribed sex role to his, or her, individual identity" (Bland, 2005). Gender role identity is the way in which an individual processes societal messages about gender role and does or does not integrate this information with other aspects of his or her identity. It refers to the way one understands one's gender. This paper will largely be

concerned with gender role identity and how it develops. How do children process

information about gender role and integrate it with their identity, and how does equal

parenting inform the development of gender role identity?

<p style="text-align: center;">Theoretical Literature on the Relationship Between Primary Female Parenting, Gender</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Identity, and Relationship Satisfaction</p>

Early hypotheses about the relationship between the gender of parental figures

and child development, particularly gender development, focused on primary mothering

and grew out of feminist psychoanalytic critiques and revisions of Freud's largely

androcentric theory of development. Feminist theorists of the late 1970s made

connections between primary female parenting and gender development on both

individual and societal levels. In 1976, Dorothy Dinnerstein's <u>The Mermaid and the</u>

<u>Minotaur</u> proposed links between primary female parenting, sexism, and aggression

towards women. "Woman will always be regarded as dangerous and debased as long as

it is she, and she alone, who first introduces us as humans to the mixed blessing of being

human," Anne Snitow quotes, in summary of Dinnerstein's work (1978, p. 190).

Dinnerstein argues that asymmetry in sexual roles between men and women, on which

sex discrimination is based, grows out of and is reproduced through primary mothering.

She suggests that both men's and women's identities are limited by the resulting splitting

of roles, as women develop in identification with the primary caregiver, and men develop

in opposition.

In 1978, Nancy Chodorow published <u>The Reproduction of Mothering</u>, which

explored how primary female caretaking dramatically influences gender development,

highlighting the pre-oedipal ties of both boys and girls to the female early attachment

figure. Chodorow argued that the oedipal conflicts for boys and girls are different and more complex than Freud suggested, in large part due to primary female parenting. She describes the development of females as characterized by ambivalence and the management of continuing strong ties to the mother, even as the desire for the father builds during the oedipal phase. For men, Chodorow details what Notman (1993) refers to as "the defensive development of the male against the powerful ties to the mother" (p. 826). Both Dinnerstein and Chodorow suggest that our gendered experiences as children of the primary caregiver and most powerful attachment figure inevitably lead us to draw gendered conclusions about the domains of intimacy and nurturing. If men provided similar care and became equally powerful attachment figures, would our conception of gender be as dichotomized?

Countless feminist and psychoanalytic theorists have echoed and expanded upon Chodorow's and Dinnerstein's arguments relating mothering to the process by which dichotomized notions of gender are passed from generation to generation. Their respective works express common themes in terms of the consequences of primary female parenting for both females and males. Chodorow challenges Freud's "change of object theory," instead characterizing the oedipal relationships of girls as "bisexual relationship triangles," in which the father is idealized but mother continues to be a source of intense attachment (Prozan, 1992, p. 127). She points out female-specific developmental challenges that continue into adulthood. Chodorow (1989) also speaks of boundary diffusion between mothers and daughters resulting from the ongoing intense identification. While the healthy early attachment relationship to the mother may be experienced as symbiotic, a woman's lack of an equally emotionally compelling father

may manifest itself later in life as a limited sense of separateness. "Most women emerge from their Oedipus complex oriented toward to their father and men as primary erotic objects, but it is clear that men tend to remain more emotionally secondary, or at most emotionally equal, in contrast to the primacy and exclusivity of the Oedipal boy's emotional tie to his mother and women" (Chodorow, 1989, p. 71). Chodorow argues the mother experiences the daughter as an extension of the self, causing female children to develop with the capacity for emotional closeness and a tolerance for interdependence with others, while men develop a strong sense of separateness and individual identity. Women continue to crave and desire strong relationships with both women and men, but have less tolerance for separation and less sense of individual identity (Prozan, 1992).

More recent psychoanalytic theorists continue to echo and expand upon Chodorow's developmental theory. Holtzman and Kulish (2003) suggest that the maintenance of strong ties to the primary object (mother), despite the addition of father as desired object, leads women to more intense relationships with less defined boundaries. They go on to present what they call "women's denial of aggression and sexuality" which functions to preserve the early tie to the mother. The power and primacy of the female attachment figure, unchecked by the addition of another parental figure so strongly linked to survival as mother, creates in both men and women a fear of women's power and potential destructiveness (Dinnerstein, 1976). Holtzman and Kulish (2003) suggest a women's strong same-sex identification with mother translates into a fear of her own destructiveness, resulting in a defensive narrowing and over-control of aggressive and sexual impulses. While Holtzman and Kulish provide case examples of how such defenses become problematic and how they can be worked through in psychoanalytic

therapy, their theory suggests broader consequences for women in terms of Dinnerstein's earlier hypotheses about gender role dichotomization. Taken together, these theories suggest primary female parenting strengthens the female capacity for emotional closeness with both men and women, and creates a more bisexual orientation in women than in men, but leaves women fearing abandonment and loss of connection and inhibits their natural aggressive, sexual, and independent longings.

In keeping with the concept of dichotomization of gender roles, theorized consequences of female parenting for men are opposite of those for women. Chodorow suggests that male children become unable to tolerate dependency and fear intimacy (1989). Contemporary masculinist psychoanalytic theorists have revisited both Freudian and second-wave feminist interpretations of developmental theory, echoing and expanding upon the theories of Chodorow and others to challenge Freudian notions not only of female oedipal conflict but also of male oedipal dynamics. Masculinist theorists like Levant and Pollack have begun comparing earlier feminist developmental theories with contemporary empirical evidence, particularly in the areas of male gender role strain and the relationship between father involvement and gender roles. Levant and Pollack (1995) echo Dinnerstein's earlier assertions about dichotomization of roles. "The adult relationships men and women have with each other, therefore, become polarized – connection and autonomy are seen as the special province of one gender alone" (p. 56). Pollack focuses on the limitations male development imposes on men, particularly in terms of emotional development and capacity for connection. Pollack (1995) introduces the concept of *defensive autonomy*, a "style of emotional suppression… which frustrates the capacity for any mutual intimacy" (p. 34). Pollack (1995) references Chodorow,

arguing that primary mothering creates a vast difference between the defensive sense of maleness that men develop in opposition to the mother, and the less problematic sense of femaleness that women develop through connection with a same-sex primary attachment figure. He argues that in the absence of a primary male parent, boys are left learning what it is to be masculine not through identification, but through opposition; that is, through attempts to <u>not</u> be a woman.

Pleck's (1995) male gender role strain theory, which is built upon the concept of development through dis-identification, also describes the male position as tenuous, with men needing to prove their masculinity. Pleck argues that while earlier "identity-ist" male development theories focused on universal psychological dynamics within the oedipal triangle, or the lack of experiences in men comparable to childbirth, his gender role strain theory places primary female parenting as a cause of a systemic, rather than universal dynamic. He concludes that, as earlier feminist theorists suggested, it is the social construction of the oedipal triangle, with its dichotomized roles, that creates the oedipal dynamics that have been described by psychoanalytic theorists and clinicians since Freud.

Pleck, Pollack, and others suggest that what Pollack has called the *traumatic abrogation* of the early holding environment (forced breaking of identification with the mother) is experienced as a trauma, one which men repress at an early age (Pleck, 1995). Men are left seeking intimacy with females to repair this damage, but they are too terrified of being re-traumatized to allow themselves to fully engage intimately. Similar theoretical issues have been raised by theorists at the Stone Center, specifically Bergman (1995), who uses the term *male relational dread,* to refer to overwhelmed feelings and

avoidant behavior in men engaged in intimate connection who lack the skills to manage and process such emotional interactions. He argues that men develop via contrasting themselves with others (as they did with the early opposite-sex caregiver), rather than via relating and connecting.

Theorists affiliated with The Stone Center stress that males possess the same primary desire and ability for connection as women, but they argue that these inclinations are perverted by a very early defensive structure. Such a structure develops in response to what Bergman (1995) characterizes as a break from a "mutually empathic relationship" with the mother (p. 74). Bergman argues that it is the presence of the opposite-sex primary caregiver, in the absence of an additional available object of the same sex, which creates alexithymia and relational deficits in men. The literature on alexithymia (Fischer & Good, 1997) further emphasizes relational deficits in men. Thus, the consequences of gender role dichotomization and primary female parenting for men include a strong sense of identity and separateness coupled with a stunted capacity for intimacy and emotional expressiveness. Pleck (1995) notes that these consequences are exacerbated contemporarily by their contribution to male gender role strain. In fact, Fischer and Good (1997) found that men with greater gender role conflict also had higher levels of alexithymia and fear of intimacy. As men are no longer needed by women as breadwinners, and are expected to take on more childrearing functions, men's lives are characterized by mixed messages: They renounce their relational selves at an early age but find themselves lacking the skills they need to feel confident in their ability to rear children and provide the emotional support women desire in heterosexual relationships.

For both males and females, the consequences of limited male parental involvement can be summarized as a dichotomization of gender roles.   The division of family labor actually contributes to the construction of gender by disguising the common features of men and women (Benjamin, 1990).   Hare-Mustin (1988) has described "alpha-bias," the exaggeration of difference, such that outgroups like women are seen as homogeneous, and differences between groups (men and women) are hyperbolized, with a lack of emphasis on the role of social conditioning. The dichotomization of gender roles resulting from single-gendered parenting causes alpha-bias, leading to a disguising of within-group differences and an exaggeration of between-gender differences. Dichotomization of gender roles also has consequences for relationship satisfaction in heterosexual relationships. Chodorow (1989) writes that "male and female relationships come to be strained in regularized ways that we recognize and come to expect" (p. 66). Chodorow suggests the very needs men and women seek to fill by building family relationships come to create immense challenges within these relationships. Freud similarly wrote that "the preparation for marriage frustrates the aims of marriage itself" (in Chodorow, 1989, p. 67). Primary female parenting leaves heterosexual men and women with oedipally-derived desires for the opposite sex. For men, there is a longing for re-connection with the female that is frustrated by dichotomized gender roles which leave men and women at a loss to fully understand each other. A focus on co-parenting could tease out other differences between the genders from those imposed by development in connection with or in opposition to a primary female caretaker.

This study seeks to examine the relationship between shared parenting and gender role flexibility and relationship satisfaction in offspring. Three decades of feminist and

masculinist psychoanalytic theory have described the assumed consequences of primary female parenting for male and female children, including ramifications for gender role development, dichotomized gender identities, and the perversions of human desires for connectedness and separateness into gendered categories. Meanwhile, a generation of children has grown up having experienced, in response to the feminist movement that produced these theories, differing degrees of shared parenting. Children raised equally by parents of both sexes may permit us to test the hypotheses about gender and relationship satisfaction posited by these theories, and yet little data has been collected from them. Do these adult children possess less dichotomized gender identities? Do they experience greater relationship satisfaction than their peers who experience primary female parenting? If so, this would support arguments that primary mothering, and not innate differences or others factors, account for gender dichotomization, and that gender roles as we currently view them are not entirely the natural order but are a result of our family structures, specifically of the splitting of providership and parenting along gendered lines. It would also suggest that women's entry into the workplace is not enough to change these dynamics, but that increased father involvement would give us a more realistic picture of how different men and women truly are.

Empirical Literature on Shared Parenting and Gender Identity, Marital Satisfaction

The existing empirical literature supports the argument for investigating shared parenting as it relates to gender role identity and later relationship satisfaction. First, the equal parenting argument rests on the idea that traditional gender roles, particularly those associated with mothering and development, are not biologically determined, and that men are equally capable of providing nurturing. Relational dread and alexithymia in men

are held to be culturally created rather than a reflection of a biological predisposition (Fischer & Good, 1997; Levant & Pollack, 1995); they do not correspond with the emotionality displayed by newborn male babies. Infant research has shown male babies to be as expressive as, and in some cases more emotional than female babies. A review of the literature on the differences between male and female babies concluded that girl infants are calmer, less irritable, and more alert than male babies (Malatesta & Haviland, 1982). Pollack (1995) summarizes a line of research suggesting that girl infants can engage more in socialization with their mothers than boys. Pollack concludes biological predispositions may interact with caregiver patterns to create the divergent socialization patterns we see today.

Other research suggests, however, that caregivers' reactions may actually counteract biological dispositions. Pollack summarizes a set of studies suggesting that male infants are more emotionally expressive and concluding that mothers and daughters may have to work harder to read each other than mothers and sons (45). Pollack suggests this may be the beginning of a life-long pattern of increased emotional expressiveness. Other studies have documented that mothers use more emotional words with girls and talk more about sadness with girls and anger with boys (Pollack, 1995). Pollack concludes that genetic predisposition and socialization patterns combine to doom male children to develop with fewer emotional skills, but not because boys are born with emotional deficits. While infant studies are mixed in their conclusions about gender differences in emotional expression, men's capacity for nurturance has been documented. Pollack's review of the literature on empathy suggests that male and female inborn capacities for empathy, a key component of nurturing, are similar (1995).

While empirical evidence suggests that socialization may exaggerate or even change inborn predispositions toward emotionality, one may wonder what is so harmful about exaggerated or dichotomized gender roles. An extensive empirical literature documents advantages to androgynous gender role presentation in vastly different areas of functioning. Androgyny, most often operationalized utilizing the Bem Sex Role Inventory, has predicted secure attachment, relationship satisfaction, school achievement, better relationships with parents and other family members, self-esteem, and leadership ability (Brooks, 2000; Davison, 2000; Dusek, 1987; Johnson, 1996; Lavine & Lombardo, 1984; Petrohilou, 1998). Furthermore, androgynous gender identity in men predicts greater parental involvement (DeFrain, 1979; May & Strikwerda, 1992). Thus, if father involvement does lead to more androgynous gender roles in sons, it would also lead to more father involvement in those boys when they grow up. Perceived skill at parenting also predicted higher father involvement (Sanderson, 2000), suggesting that if males were to identify more with care-giving roles while developing, they would be likely to parent more. Expectations by mothers of father involvement, as well as mothers' identification with nontraditional gender roles, predicted higher male-parenting behavior and primary fathering during the first year of life (Averett, Gennetian, & Peters, 2000; Maurer & Pleck, 2006), indicating that the expectation of shared parenting likely increases the willingness of fathers to play a large role. Additionally, some mothers may consciously or unconsciously undermine their male partner's confidence in the nurturing role. This is a dynamic which presumably would not be occurring in those families where mothers are expecting a high level of participation from fathers.

Additionally, if the dichotomizing of gender roles perpetuates patriarchal systems and contributes to the entrenchment of misogynistic and sexist attitudes and practices, as Dinnerstein, Chodorow, and others have argued, promoting more flexible gender roles should work toward weakening those systems. Male dominance is perpetuated in part by a devaluation of traditionally female roles. If fathers were to participate in care-giving and nurturing roles to a greater extent, they would presumably gain a better understanding of the challenges, rewards, and importance of this work, in addition to gaining a greater sense of confidence in their and other men's ability to perform such tasks successfully. Thus, the devaluing of women's work, and assumptions about men's lack of capability in emotional realms, would be debunked. Finally, to the extent that men do experience trauma at an early age as a result of separation from the primary caregiver and some degree of father-absence, it has been suggested that filling a primary parental role could ameliorate some of the feelings of loss and anger associated with that experience (Pollack, 1995).

There is also evidence that more flexible gender roles lead to higher relationship satisfaction. The mutual understanding that could arise from men's appreciation of what "women's work" actually is could improve relations in heterosexual relationships. Dinnerstein's conceptualization of the "omnipotent mother" (1976) suggests that the power the female possesses as primary love-object creates a backlash from men, which perpetuates male-dominance (providing fodder for violence against women, for example). It also may create havoc within heterosexual relationships, where men long for the early symbiosis with their mothers and are terrified of another separation, whereas a woman may see a child as an opportunity to re-create the bond with her mother (which

may result in a lack of boundaries). A man may respond to a child as an intrusion reminiscent of the father's intrusion into his primary relationship with his mother, demanding that he become more male and thus deny his desire for intimacy (Prozan, 1992). Empirical support for these arguments exists in studies that have demonstrated that for both men and women, achieving a healthy balance between autonomous functioning and affiliative relatedness predicted marital satisfaction, "good-enough" fathering, and family adaptation (Grossman, Pollack, Golding, & Fedele, 1987; Levant & Pollack, 1995). Brooks (2000) concluded that relationships function best when partners have a wide range of behaviors available, including nontraditional gendered behaviors. More satisfied husbands tend to be more egalitarian and to share household tasks, and more satisfied wives were found to be egalitarian in their values, although they may not necessarily believe that power is divided equally in their relationships (Petrohilou, 1998). While other studies have concluded that nontraditional spouses were less satisfied with their relationships, it is unclear whether these results spoke more to a lack of fit between a traditional and less traditional partner. For example, Lye and Biblarz (1993) found that nontraditional spouses were less satisfied, but also that the men and women who were the most dissatisfied held attitudes that were the most different from those of their spouses.

While it can be argued there are clear advantages to more androgynous gender presentation, what is not as clear is whether shared parenting produces children who are more androgynous, and whether this does, in fact, lead to higher relationship satisfaction when those children reach adulthood. Most of the studies of shared parenting have focused on the parents. Parents engaged in shared parenting, defined by Updegraff, McHale, and Couter (1996), as equal time spent in child-oriented activities, have been

found to have different sex-role attitudes from those of traditional parents. Deutsch, Servis, and Payne (2001) found that couples who shared parenting did not believe that women are more responsible for children or more capable of caring for them.

A much larger body of research has focused on predictors of father-involvement in childrearing. Psychological factors, age and sex of child being cared for, race and ethnicity, wife's expectations, and perceived skill at parenting all predict father involvement (Averett, 2000; Blair & Hardesty, 1994; Fish et al., 1992; Maurer & Pleck, 2006; Sanderson, 2000). Additionally, increased involvement of one's own father predicts involvement with one's children. Thus, it seems plausible that having experienced shared parenting would increase one's likelihood to parent equally, which would necessitate the incorporation of a wider sense of gender identity. Maurer and Pleck (2006) found that the perceived care-giving behaviors of a man's father predicted his greater involvement in childrearing. Maurer, Pleck, and Rane (2001) found that caregiver identity and behavior in a father were related to his wife's "reflected appraisals," ways in which the wife responded to such behaviors, including breadwinning behavior, suggesting again that less traditional gender roles of the parents predict shared parenting.

Wives who expect greater parenting from men likely have less traditional expectations for their own, and their husband's, gender roles. Sanderson (2000) found that perceived skill at parenting increased father involvement. One would suspect that perceived skill would increase with having had a highly involved father, as well as with having a wife who views care-giving as part of one's role. If fathers who engage in shared parenting have less traditional gender roles, and themselves had fathers who were

more involved, it is fair to hypothesize a relationship between the shared parenting (or at least father-involvement), and more androgynous gender identity. But what about studies that actually look at the children of shared parenting in terms of their gender roles?

A small number of empirical and qualitative studies have attempted to operationalize shared parenting and measure gender outcomes in the children of shared parenting families. Most measured other outcomes in addition to gender role identity. Lamb and Oppenheim (1989) report that in families where fathers did half or more childrearing, children showed greater cognitive skills, more empathy, less sex-stereotyped beliefs, and a more internal locus of control. Booth and Amato (1994) found that mothers' participation in the labor force and fathers' participation in household tasks had neither a negative nor a positive effect on children. In a longitudinal study, they found no difference in psychological well-being or relationship satisfaction in offspring from nontraditional families. However, nontraditional families were defined by number of hours wife is employed, number of hours father spends doing housework, and gender attitudes of each spouse. Parenting variables and psychological variables such as support were not considered. Still, the offspring in these families did have nontraditional gender role attitudes. While this study did not operationalize shared parenting specifically, its results suggest that parents who take on nontraditional roles will bring up children with nontraditional gender roles.

The Updegraff (1996) study mentioned earlier, which looked at parents' gender roles and shared parenting, did not assess children's gender roles specifically, but found that females from shared-parenting families maintained higher levels of achievement across the transition to 7th grade, while girls from more traditional families declined in

achievement. This suggests less vulnerability to gendered achievement patterns, which could result from more androgynous gender role identity. A set of studies by Pruett (1987, 1989) found boys reared by "primary nurturant fathers" had "a healthier flexibility in their socialized gender role identity," as described by Arendell (1997). Taken together, these studies suggest a link between flexible gender role identity and the experience of shared parenting, but they hardly comprise a large and focused body of research. Some focus on father-involvement, and others operationalize shared parenting but do not focus on gender role identity as a construct. Additionally, many are relatively outdated, and may not reflect a contemporary vision of shared parenting, or may allow for definitions of nontraditional parenting that are not stringent enough to differentiate these parents from more traditional parents. However, they do suggest important potential benefits of shared parenting, including more flexible gender identity, and they make a strong case for exploring further the relationship between co-parenting and gender identity. Furthermore, the extensive literature on father involvement has documented an array of positive outcomes in addition to more flexible gender identity. These include sense of security, curiosity, empathy, moral responsibility, academic success and achievement, healthy body image, and capacity for intimacy (Arendell, 1997; Biller, 1993; Lamb, 1987; Pleck, 1997).

Other interesting data about the impact of shared parenting on children's gender identity comes from the self-reports of those who have attempted to distribute parenting tasks equally. Sandra Bem's An Unconventional Family (1998) details her and her husband's attempts to "function as truly egalitarian partners and parents and also to raise children in accordance with gender-liberated, anti-homophobic, and sex-positive feminist

ideals" (p. x). Bem writes about the ease with which she and her husband, both feminists and both committed to an egalitarian relationship, were able to split up household tasks prior to having children. After children entered their family, the Bems structured their lives so as to spend equal time at parenting tasks, and weighted each partner's contribution to the family and work outside the family equally. For example, they switched off days when one or the other would be the "on-duty" parent, responsible for all decisions and tasks related to childcare. The children were aware of the system, and knew which parent to go to. The other partner was free to engage in childcare or not when not on duty (96). Bem speaks about the many people who told her that the equality in her marriage would begin to disappear when children entered the picture, but this was not her experience. She found that from the very beginning, her husband bonded with the new infants when they were born and was a full parent to them in every way.

The Bems were also committed to non gender-stereotyped parenting. "We need to sever all the culturally constructed connections that currently exist in our society between what sex a person is and virtually every other aspect of human experience, including modes of dress, social roles, and even ways of expressing emotions and experiencing sexual desire. We need to cut back the male-female distinction to a narrow – if critically important – aspect having to do primarily with reproduction" (ix).

At the end of Bem's memoir, her children speak about their experiences of equal parenting, and describe their own highly androgynous gender role presentations. Jeremy, 21 at the time the memoir was written, describes how he feels he can move in and out of different conversations and worlds, relating to women, and some men, on an emotional level, but at other times joining in more male-traditional interactions. He feels he is freer

to express himself artistically and emotionally than most men. Both Jeremy and Emily (24) have incorporated the belief system of their parents, and see gender as only a small aspect of differences between human beings. Emily speaks about a much more fluid conception of her sexuality, in which she mostly dates men, but also finds herself attracted to women. Emily talks about how she does not shave her legs or alter her body to live up to conventional beauty standards, but says she struggled for a long time with finding a way to feel sexy and appealing despite this.

The Bem example is not a pure example of the relationship between shared parenting and gender identity in that the Bems' strong feminist beliefs and opinions about gender identity were a major factor in their children's upbringing, to an extent that is unusual for most parents who share childrearing equally. However, the Bem example does provide a concrete instance of how childrearing can be divided, and does illustrate the ways in which the modeling of egalitarianism and androgyny by the parents was passed on to the children. The Bem memoir also presents some of the challenges of shared parenting, including Bem's description of how, by the time her children were teens, she found that she and her husband had drifted somewhat toward more traditional roles, in that she provided more of the emotional nurturance at that time. The Bem memoir raises an important question. Do parents need to actively teach their children the limitations of the gender expectations and presentations of the larger culture, or is modeling egalitarian parenting and flexible gender roles enough?

The literature on shared parenting and future relationship satisfaction is even sparser than the data on shared parenting and future gender identity. Again, what little data exists tends to focus on the parents themselves. Ehrenberg, Gearing-Small, Hunter,

& Small, (2001), for example, found that "relational and psychological shared parenting dimensions" predicted marital satisfaction, parental competence, and closeness to children. Some evidence also comes out of the father-involvement literature; for example, that fathers' marital satisfaction is higher when their involvement with an infant is higher (Lee & Doherty, 2007), and that father-involvement predicts a wife's marital satisfaction. No studies were found that investigated the later marital satisfaction of children of shared parenting, while results from studies of children from generally "nontraditional" families were mixed, possibly due to the vastly different conceptualizations of non-traditionalism in these studies.

The literature on father involvement in childrearing does report other positive outcomes for men involved in childrearing, which suggest that further study into martial satisfaction and gender identity in children could prove fruitful. For example, higher levels of general well-being, lower levels of depression, and less psychological distress were found in fathers who were more involved in childrearing (Pleck 1995; Barnett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992). These factors would be likely to improve marital relations as well. While higher parental role identity predicts more happiness and higher self-esteem in men, it does not do so in women (Pollack, 1995). This may be because while women have historically, and in some cases remain restricted from the breadwinning role, in most cases they are not, while men remain largely focused on breadwinning. Thus, identifying with the parental role may not raise women's self-esteem or happiness; whereas for men, traditionally estranged from the caregiver role, the addition of this role may improve happiness. Women's depression, however, is affected by men's total and proportionate childcare, and women's depression and health are related to their

perceptions of fairness in the division of labor (Blair & Hardesty, 1994). This finding

suggests that men's increased participation would increase not only men's but also

women's happiness and marital satisfaction.

It is important to note potential downsides to increased father involvement as

well, in terms of women's well-being and marital satisfaction. For mothers, father

involvement could decrease their workload but reduce the main sphere in which they

have control and influence, causing them to feel less empowered overall (Pleck, 1985).

For some couples, a traditional division of labor may provide structure and decrease

confusion about how to divide tasks, thus preventing relationship strain. In Families that

Co-Parent, Diane Ehrensaft (1990) suggests that more intimacy between father and child

will result in less tension between the mother and child, but will create a new tension

about who will receive father's intimacy, mother or child. Also, a study by Hynes (2005)

suggested that if father-involvement means fewer resources for children, it may not result

in the same positive outcomes. Hynes looked at resource combinations in heterosexual

parents, and found that fathers who were more involved but had lower incomes had

children with lower verbal and problem-solving skills than children of less involved

fathers with more income. (These results could also be due to a third variable: Fathers

may have lower income because they are of lower intelligence, or lower social/emotional

intelligence, which may have been passed on to their children, or may experience greater

stress due to financial burdens and that stress may negatively impact the children)

Booth and Amato (1994) found that traditional fathers had slightly poorer

relationships with offspring than nontraditional fathers. Additionally, there is a body of

literature on "work-family conflict" which suggests spousal support lowers work-family

conflict in both men and women. Furthermore, according to Pollack (1995) for both men and women, achieving a "healthy balance between autonomous functioning and affiliative relatedness predicted marital satisfaction, 'good-enough' fathering, general parental capacity, children's positive mood, and family adaptation." Arendell suggests that father involvement improves female parenting because it reduces the strain on mothers and allows them to avoid burnout. Several studies suggest links between parents' division of childrearing and housework, overall quality of parenting, and types of gender roles children observe (Coltrane & Adams, 1997; Deutsch, Servis, & Payne, 2001; Sabattini & Leaper, 2004). Overall, the evidence suggests that increased father involvement and/or shared parenting improves family functioning, with higher marital satisfaction, better parenting by both males and females, closer relationships between parents and children, and higher self-esteem and happiness in men.

This study seeks to create a working definition of shared parenting, and to test it against the experiences of a sample of adult children of shared parenting. Additionally, this study seeks to serve as a bridge between psychoanalytic feminist and masculinist theories about primary mothering and the nascent body of research on gender identity and relationship satisfaction of children who have experienced shared parenting as opposed to primary mothering. It seeks to determine whether, as suggested by these theories, children who experience a male and female primary parent develop more flexible gender identities and whether, as adults, they function more successfully in heterosexual relationships. In response to the paucity of empirical literature testing recent psychoanalytic theories of gender development, this study seeks to gather robust qualitative data in order to generate more specific hypotheses and to suggest possible

ways to operationalize concepts like shared parenting. It also seeks to determine whether the gender identity of adult children of shared parenting, does, in fact, appear to differ from the gender identity of those raised in more traditional families. This investigation seeks to begin to define an area of study committed to the analysis of the experience of children who have been raised according to the principles of the feminist movement, who may have benefited from a wider sense of gender identity in both men and women.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research

This study utilized a primarily qualitative research method, with quantitative

methods included in order to identify subjects for qualitative study, and to assess the

extent to which these subjects did represent a specific group that differs from the general

population. Quantitative methods were also utilized to provide additional confirmation of

the subjects' self-reports regarding their gender identity and relationship satisfaction.

The study utilized qualitative methods, however, to obtain in-depth, rich data on the

breath of experiences of shared parenting and its impact on gender role identity and

relationship satisfaction.

While qualitative methods have been widely accepted in other social sciences, in

Psychology positivist research ideals have frequently prevailed, leaving qualitative work

with a second-class designation. More recently, however, qualitative methods have

become more widely understood and utilized to flesh out and add depth to areas of

quantitative study, and to explore research areas in which qualitative methods are better

suited. According to McCracken (1988), on whose method the current study was

modeled, qualitative research is often utilized when the goal is to "isolate and define

categories during the process of research" (16). Alan Kazdin (2007) comments on the

over-reliance on quantitative methods in psychological science, arguing, "other traditions

(e.g., single-case and qualitative research) would greatly expand and complement the yield and generate as well as test theory in new ways" (p. 27). Qualitative research is not only a legitimate form of study with a rich history in varied social sciences, but it is also a necessary form.

McCracken's (1988) "long-interview" method provides a clear example of the rich, in-depth data that can be drawn from qualitative research and the kind of analyses that can be conducted. In McCracken's own words, the method "gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (p. 9). Because the researcher is not working to operationalize one or more focused constructs to test, qualitative study allows the investigator to suspend judgment and work with a more robust, general set of inputs. The data in the qualitative arm of this study consisted of the narratives of participants who were responding to general, non-directive questions in an interview format. The topic of these interviews was the impact of the experience of having two parents equally involved in their upbringings, and particularly how this experience informed their gender identity formation and their current relationship satisfaction.

There are several reasons why qualitative research is most appropriate for studying the relationships between shared parenting, gender role identity and relationship satisfaction at this time, the most compelling being the lack of prior analyses of gender role identity as it is informed by the division of parenting roles. There is not enough existing data about what aspects of gender identity are related to shared parenting, and what aspects of shared parenting might affect gender identity or even to define specific constructs to measure quantitatively. For example, it is unclear how to operationalize

equal parenting, and which aspects of parental division of labor might be most relevant to gender role identity development, or might play a role in determining future relationship satisfaction. Exclusively quantitative research at this point could have resulted in a premature narrowing of possibilities and potential avenues for study, a danger which could result in inaccurate or incomplete understandings of these important relationships. As Morse and Richards (2007) warn, "preemptive reduction of the data will prevent discovery" (30).

This research encouraged those who have experienced shared parenting to theorize the relationships between their experience of parenting and their current gender role identity and relationship satisfaction, thus allowing researchers to learn from subjects about the nature of these relationships. As McCracken (1988) suggests, this study utilized the minds and experiences of the subjects to define important categories and concepts. This allowed for the emergence of paradigms or constructs that could later be tested quantitatively and offered participants the opportunity to organize their experience in a meaningful way. There was a wide range of experiences that this population could potentially identify as related to their parents' egalitarian divisions of labor.

There are limits inherent in this type of research, in that the adult subjects are being asked to report on their experiences as children. One could argue they are in an ideal position to explore how their parents' division of childrearing labor affected them. Still, as in any self-report situation, subjects' memories will be colored by their biases, perspectives, and life experiences. The question of the accuracy of memories is given less weight in this type of research than the question of how participants make sense of the memories and their relationship to gender role identity and relationship satisfaction.

The goal of this study is not, for example, to determine with complete accuracy the number of hours each parent spent at certain tasks, but instead to assess what the adult's memory is of how the parents divided childcare tasks, in general, and to understand from that adult's perspective how that experience informed his or her gender role identity and eventual romantic relationships.

<div align="center">Long Interview Methodology</div>

McCracken's (1988) "long interview" method was particularly well-suited to exploring adults' experiences of shared parenting. According to McCracken, qualitative methods stress complexity over precision (p. 16). The long interview method provides the researcher with the tools to conduct ethnographic research within his or her own culture, both by maintaining an awareness of one's own cultural biases and by utilizing one's cultural knowledge to deepen the complexity of study. McCracken (1988) speaks of the "self as instrument" and the need to locate incoming data within one's own experience, while recognizing those aspects of one's experience that could inadvertently narrow one's ability to collect a breadth of data (p. 20).

The long interview method utilizes concepts from both the Grounded Theory and Ethnography qualitative traditions. While ethnographic methods have traditionally been considered best conducted by those outside the cultural group under study, using observational techniques within a certain field or setting, McCracken (1988) and others have expanded these techniques to be utilized within one's own culture, stressing the use of the interview in situations in which observation would be unseemly, or in which the phenomenon under investigation is not directly observable (Morse & Richards, 2007). Grounded theory techniques, most widely espoused by Glaser and Strauss, include a

specific, stringent set of techniques for generating and analyzing data.   Qualitative

studies outside this tradition, however, often utilize aspects of grounded theory data

analysis, including theory-building strategies, in which larger and more comprehensive

categories are gradually formed from the data (Morse & Richards, 2007). Strauss,

Glaser, and others have stressed the importance of not preemptively forming hypotheses,

but instead allowing the data to inform how the study progresses, including the types of

questions that are asked and the types of subjects who are recruited.

   Morse and Richards (2007) stress two crucial aspects of the integrity of

qualitative research: purposiveness and congruence. Purposiveness refers to the

importance of choosing methods and study designs that produce data germane to the

goals of the study. Congruence means that all stages of research should follow logically

from other stages. The way data is gathered, how it is managed, and how it is analyzed

should be related in a meaningful way. McCracken's long interview method follows a

four-step model suited to the goals of the current study, in which the researcher is

embedded within the culture under study, and the subject matter can best be captured

through in-depth interview. Questions related to one's experience of parenting, one's

issues of identity and the formation of self, and one's functioning in relationship were

conceptual and theoretical, requiring the respondent to survey a lifetime of experiences

and beliefs. Such experiences cannot be observed, but are best captured through in-

depth, in-person interactions, in which a researcher can take opportunities to expand upon

relevant areas, in order to assess certain key dimensions. For example, in the current

study, questions centered on getting a general sense of the experience of shared

parenting, but then focused the respondent on gender role identity and issues of

relationship satisfaction. Because it was impossible to predict what aspects of these general areas respondents would choose to cover, this information could not be gathered through questionnaire, and observational techniques would not be able to cover such a wide range of life experience, nor would they capture the ways in which the subject makes sense of his or her own unique experiences.

Interview techniques are of paramount importance in the long interview method. The interviewer attempted to be an unobtrusive as possible, utilizing open-ended prompts, but avoiding active listening techniques, which could color the respondent's answers or lead the interview (McCracken, 1988). The long interview is designed to steer the respondent to a discovery of his or her own beliefs and experiences, to articulate concepts which may be so ingrained they are taken for granted. A level of rapport is necessary to conduct such an interview, but McCracken (1988) also stresses "manufacturing distance," maintaining a certain level of formality. Respondents may be more honest and less censored with an optimal level of formality, similar to the experience of confiding in a fellow passenger on a plane. The relationship should be comfortable enough to encourage dialogue, but should feel only as intimate as a temporary interaction.

Interviews

The first two steps of McCracken's (1988) method involved preparation for conducting interviews. The first required the interviewer to conduct a review of the literature. While some adherents of qualitative methods suggest that reviewing the literature can bias the researcher (Morse & Richards, 2007), McCracken (1988) believes the literature review provides more benefits than limits. It is important for a researcher to

be aware of prior research in order to be free to confirm or disconfirm, then potentially

question the very categories and assumptions prior research has utilized. An awareness

of prior literature provides the basis for designing the interview questionnaire by

"establishing the domains" the interview will cover (p. 31).

The second step, "review of cultural categories…gives the investigator a more

detailed and systematic appreciation of his or her personal experience with the topic" (p.

33). On the one hand, this exercise can allow the researcher to become aware of potential

biases that could narrow the breadth of the research questionnaire or the interviewer's

openness to certain areas of inquiry. On the other, this exploration can make the

interviewer aware of crucial personal experiences or cultural knowledge which can aid

her in locating interview data within a cultural and personal context. The researcher must

both "familiarize and defamiliarize" herself with the research context (p. 13). The

interviewer's review of cultural categories follows later in this chapter.

McCracken's third step involves formalization of the interview protocol,

beginning with "grand-tour" questions meant to direct the respondent in a general way to

the interview topic. In this study, that meant starting with general questions related to the

experience of shared parenting, then moving on to questions related to the relationship

between the experience of equal parenting, development of gender role identity, and

relationship satisfaction. Questions also addressed whether other caretakers were

involved in the subjects' upbringing, cultural factors that might have influenced parenting

style, and why the subject believes the parents divided tasks the way they did, including

whether specific messages about gender role identity were communicated in the home.

Floating prompts were used intermittently to seek more in-depth information if questions

were not answered fully or if additional information seemed relevant. In most cases, the initial set of questions was all that was needed to gather the desired information. Later in the interview, more specific questions, referred to by McCracken as "planned prompts," were utilized to address other key areas determined from the literature review and cultural assessments, when they were not broached within the natural flow of the interview. For example, subjects were asked to describe their own gender role identity (see **Appendix A:** <u>Interview Questions</u>). Interviews turned out to be on average shorter than had been expected, lasting under one hour. However, subjects' answers were candid and specific and in general quite thorough. Subjects were more concise than had been expected, and easily focused on the specific areas being assessed. This brevity may have been due, in part, to the fact that most of the subjects had a high level of education and worked in fields where verbal skills are stressed.

<center>Interview Analysis</center>

In step four of the McCracken Method (1988), the interviewer engaged in the "discovery of analytic categories" (41), a five-stage process which took the researcher through verbatim narratives of the interviews, beginning with treating specific utterances as data to be analyzed, and ending with the development of key themes or categories that spanned across interviews and seemed to encapsulate the findings.

The discovery process began with a verbatim transcript of each interview. The researcher approached the transcripts with the goal of determining "the categories, relationships, and assumptions that inform the respondent's view of the world in general and the topic in particular." The discovery process illuminated how the respondent understood his or her gender role identity development in relationship to his or her

experiences being raised in a co-parenting setting. In addition, it focused on the way

participants believe their development in such families has shaped and currently informs

their relationship satisfaction. McCracken (1988) stresses that the researcher does not

approach the transcript blindly, but rather allows her expectations from the literature, her

own experience with the topic, and her initial sense of the interview to inform the

process. Despite this, the researcher aims to construct "a view of the world that bears no

relation to his or her own view or the one evident in the literature" (p. 42). In this case,

the researcher attempted to re-construct the respondent's worldview and experience as it

related to the topic at hand, using her prior knowledge as a guide, but a guide that can be

abandoned when it is disconfirmed.

McCracken (1988) outlines five stages of the analysis process, moving from

specific analysis to general concepts. The first stage examines individual utterances

without regard for their relationship to other parts of the interview. In this phase, the

researcher resisted meaning construction, but rather allowed her own associations to

specific words and phrases to emerge. Further, key concepts from literature review and

cultural analysis were noted. Next, these observations were fleshed out in relation to

evidence in the transcript that supported them, their relation to the literature review and

cultural analysis, and the deepening of the analysis of the interview sections. In this

second stage, sections of the transcript are considered in terms of their potential larger

meanings and relationships to other aspects. Third, these level-two observations are

examined in pursuit of connections and relationships between and among them. In this

stage, the researcher begins to move away from the transcript itself. By this point,

McCracken suggests "a field of patterns should be rising into view" (p. 45). In the next

stage, the prior observations are scrutinized for "inter-theme consistency and contradiction" (p. 42). At this point the researcher used her judgment to assess thematic areas that had been identified, determine their importance, and inferred their interrelationship. Major emergent themes were noted, under which others could be categorized. In the final stage, patterns and themes that emerged across interviews and subjects were analyzed. The stage-four concepts from all of the interviews were reviewed, and responses of interviewees were considered as a group, rather than in terms of the individual sessions.

Quantitative Measures

Quantitative measures were used to identify those subjects who experienced the highest degree of shared parenting. This procedure determined who should be interviewed and demonstrated that the chosen subjects had, in fact, had an experience different from that of most survey respondents. The survey also provided information about how childcare tasks had been divided and how common shared parenting is. Correlational data was collected exploring the relationship between shared parenting and demographics such as age, gender, and racial identity, and exploring the relationship between having had shared parenting and practicing it oneself. Quantitative measures were also used to assess variables for which reliable and valid measures exist in order to compare the subjects' reports to existing empirical measures of gender role identity and relationship satisfaction. Although the relationship between shared parenting, gender role identity, and relationship satisfaction was not tested quantitatively at this stage for reasons discussed above, quantitative measures of these major variables helped to corroborate or question the reports of subjects who saw connections between these

experiences. For example, the in-depth thoughts and experiences of a subject who saw a relationship between having had equal parenting and establishing an androgynous gender stance were considered of even greater interest and value in establishing core concepts related to this relationship if the Bem Sex Role Inventory confirmed the subject's androgynous gender role identity.

Participants

McCracken suggests no more than eight subjects should be interviewed in the greatest depth possible. In this study, the goal for respondents was at least eight, but the final number was set as the interviews occurred. Morse and Richards (2007) stress that qualitative methods must be flexible, and often, the type of data that will be gathered, and how much will be needed, cannot be known until interviewing begins. The number of participants depended on how many of those who took the survey distinguished themselves as having experienced shared parenting, and to what degree. Ten subjects met criteria to be interviewed, and of these all ten were interviewed. Because the number of potential subjects for interviews was small, there was not a great deal of choice in terms of demographics, despite an initial interest in obtaining as diverse a group as possible.

Survey participants had been drawn from several sources also aimed at providing a diverse pool. They were recruited from listservs including the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology at Rutgers University in Piscataway, Student and Alumni listservs, the Rutgers-Camden Environmental Law Society and Law Journal listservs, and the Middlesex County Association of Psychologists listserv. The survey was also posted on Facebook, as well as several shared parenting websites, and the

website for the survey was posted in the Unitarian Society of East Brunswick's paper

newsletter. Participants were asked to pass the survey along to co-workers, friends, and

family members, with the aim of increasing the overall reach of the survey and expanding

the range of ages and viewpoints represented. The survey was completed online, and

thus excluded those who do not use email and/or are not familiar with internet browsing.

The short survey took five to ten minutes to complete, and asked respondents to rate

which parent performed more general childrearing tasks at certain ages, and then to

identify which parent conducted more of certain specific parenting tasks overall.

Subjects were also asked to rate the overall level of shared parenting. The survey

provided an average parenting score for each subject based on Likert-scale responses

from one to five. Scores of three represented "equal or almost equal" division of the task

in question. The overall parenting scores closest to three represented the respondents

reporting parents with the most equal division of tasks. Respondents also had the

opportunity to indicate whether their parents were not living together at the age indicated,

or whether "mother and father" does not best represent their caretakers during the

specified time period.

Selection Criteria

Adults 18 years of age and older who were competent to read and write English

and cognitively able to give informed consent were eligible to complete the survey.

Respondents who had been in romantic relationships lasting at least one year were chosen

for interviews, regardless of sexual orientation, in order to assess current relationship

satisfaction. Respondents who were not in romantic relationships lasting at least one year

were excluded. Those respondents who indicated their caregivers were not in a

heterosexual relationship or were not best described as one male and one female were excluded. While the sharing of parenting tasks in other types of families are important to assess, this was beyond the scope of this study. Finally, respondents whose parents were living together for at least 10 of their first 18 years were considered. The marital status of their parents was not used for exclusion or inclusion; if their parents were not living together at least 10 of the 18 years, however, they were excluded. One un-assessed area was whether other adults were living in the home, although this was considered during the interview process in terms of how it impacted the sharing of parenting tasks.

The interviewees were chosen from the group of respondents 18 and over who met the selection criteria. Those with average scores on the shared parenting survey closest to 3.0 were considered to have had the most equal parenting, and thus were selected for interview. Respondents on the survey were told that providing their contact information was optional. Those who did not were included in an assessment of the average of all respondents in terms of degree of shared parenting, despite not being contacted for interview.   Almost half the respondents (47%) chose to include some contact information in order to be considered as interview participants. About 18% of those endorsed that their parents always or often shared parenting, as compared to 23% of the general sample. People who believed they would not be interviewed may have been slightly more likely to provide contact information, but this difference was not statistically significant. Still, there were a large number of respondents who met criteria through parenting score and relationship status but could not be considered because they did not provide contact information. It was thus not possible to interview all respondents with scores closest to 3.0, but every effort was made to interview the sample with the

highest degree of shared parenting possible. Initially subjects with shared parenting scores between 2.8 and 3.2 were considered to have the highest level of shared parenting.

Eventually, to obtain an adequate participant pool, scores as low as 2.6 were considered, as it became clear that many of the respondents with scores between 2.6 and 2.8 considered themselves to have had a high degree of shared parenting. There were nine respondents who met the original criteria and provided contact information, but three of these were excluded because of their relationship with the researcher. There was another group of 10 respondents whose surveys indicated a high degree of shared parenting, but who fell outside this threshold. For example, there was one respondent whose score fell below 2.8 only because her mother did not work outside the home. The assumption was then made that a respondent would be viewed as considering parents as largely practicing shared parenting if questions which did not relate to work outside the home resulted in a parenting score above 2.8. This respondent was consequently interviewed. For the additional respondents between 2.6 and 2.8, the decision as to whether to offer them an interview was based on their answer to a key question asking them to rate their overall level of shared parenting. Subjects with parenting scores above 2.6 who indicated their parents shared parenting "always" or "often" were included, resulting in a total of ten respondents who met criteria and were offered interviews. All ten completed the interview.

For many respondents, the opportunity for reflection provided by the long interview seemed to be cathartic, allowing an opportunity to begin or continue the development of a personal narrative. Several subjects commented that they enjoyed the

opportunity to focus specifically on this aspect of their upbringings and to reflect on how it affects them now as adults.

Measures

The Bem Sex Role Inventory was used to provide a standardized measure of the respondents' gender role identities. A self-report measure of relationship satisfaction, the DAS-7, was also utilized. A survey was used to screen subjects and gain a measure of the level of equal parenting experienced. The survey results gave each participant a score in terms of self-reported level of shared parenting from their caregivers, which was compared to others who took the survey. This allowed for identification of subjects whose parents divided parenting techniques based less on gender, in addition to providing evidence that these subjects did in fact report more equal parenting than the majority of respondents. It also provided a more concrete measure of the degree of shared parenting, which could be compared to each subject's interview regarding the experience of shared parenting. It also allowed for correlational analysis assessing the relationship between the experience of shared parenting and demographic data as well as current practice of shared parenting by subjects themselves. Scores on the survey had a potential range of 0 to 5.0, with higher scores indicating primarily male parenting, lower scores indicating primarily female parenting, and average scores closest to 3.0 indicating the most equal parenting. Each subject received a score that was then compared to the average of all scores for respondents over age 18. While results should be interpreted cautiously due to the lack of validity and reliability testing, survey results represent a first step in creating a measure that could eventually assess the level of shared parenting an adult had received.

The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) provided a quantitative, normed measure of gender role identity that could be weighed against each subject's self-reported gender role identity. For example, if a participant felt she had a more neutral or flexible gender role than the general population, her score could be compared to the standardized sample to see if this held true. The Bem Sex Role Inventory has been widely used since its development in 1974 as an instrument to measure gender role perceptions (Ellis & Holt, 1998). The BSRI provides a measure of psychological androgyny, defined as scoring high on both masculine and feminine traits. According to Bem, androgyny is an adaptive trait, which allows for more flexibility and permits an individual to draw from a wider range of behaviors. Although controversial, her claim has been borne out by research (Bem, 1974; Heilbrun, 1976; Orlofsky, 1977). Bem defines the instrument as a measure of "the extent to which respondents spontaneously sort self-relevant information into distinct masculine and feminine categories" (Bem, 1974). The self-report inventory contains sixty personality characteristics, twenty stereotypically feminine, twenty masculine, and twenty neutral, and takes about ten minutes to complete.

While there have been concerns that the Bem adjectives might be outdated (Ellis & Holt, 1998), in re-assessing the validity of male and female adjectives on the BSRI, Ellis and Holt that found that all of the masculine, and all but two of the feminine adjectives were rated significantly more desirable for either a man or woman, demonstrating that they remain valid in discriminating gender roles. A study by Edwards and Ashworth (1977) failed to confirm the validity of Bem's adjectives, claiming they failed to discriminate between stereotypical gender roles. However, Ellis & Holt (1998)

point out that the 1977 study used face-to-face interviews, in which respondents may have been less inclined to respond stereotypically.

In terms of reliability, Bem (1974) indicated high internal consistency and test-retest reliability (coefficient alpha for masculinity .86, femininity .82, four-week test-retest reliability r =.90 for masculinity, r =.90 for femininity, and r =.93 for androgyny). Holt and Ellis (1998) conducted Cronbach Alpha's for internal reliability of the BSRI which were higher, but comparable to Bem's.

Finally, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale – 7, short form, provided a reliable and valid measure of relationship satisfaction above and beyond the subjects' reports in the interviews. Busby et al. (1995) reworked the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) to improve the instrument through construct hierarchy. The instrument was analyzed to identify which concepts were homogenous and which were distinct. The scale measured relationship functioning within three key areas: consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion. Busby et al. (1995) provided evidence of the construct and criterion validity as well as reliability of the new instrument. Later, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale was shortened from a 32 to a seven-item short form. Hunsley et al. (2001) determined that the short instrument differentiates between distressed and adjusted couples as distinguished using the full DAS. Reliability and convergent validity were also comparable to those found by the original DAS. The DAS-7 consists of seven items, six of which are rated on a six-point Likert-type scale with endpoints "always agree/always disagree" or "all the time/never." The seventh item is rated on a seven-point scale with endpoints "extremely unhappy" and "perfect." DAS-7 mean scores of 15.7 (SD = 4.2) were found for those

categorized as distressed on the full DAS, and 26.2 (SD = 4.0) for those categorized as adjusted, a significant difference (Hunsley et al., 2001).

While it is too soon to create quantitative measures to explore the major questions this research asks about the relationship between shared parenting and gender role identity and relationship satisfaction, measures do exist, and were utilized, to determine exactly where respondents fall in terms of the their gender role identities and relationship status. Furthermore, the survey ensured that the participants did, in fact, represent higher than average degrees of shared parenting. These measures provided another layer of data which could be compared to and fleshed out by narrative data from the interview-data which expanded upon or diminished the validity of the respondent's testimony, allowing the researcher to determine how well they represent the population of adult children of equal parenting, and to determine how their gender role identities and relationship satisfaction compares to those of the general population.

Additionally, the survey provided data on how childcare tasks were divided among a larger sample of respondents, and the extent to which respondents' parents practiced shared parenting. The survey collected information on how childcare tasks had been divided between mother and father when the respondent had been in different age ranges, as well as which specific tasks mother and father performed. The survey also included inclusion criteria, such as relationship status and age.

Procedures

Survey respondents were recruited by email through listservs and direct email, through web site links, and through paper newsletters which directed them to access the survey online. The survey was completed online through the Survey Monkey website,

www.surveymonkey.com. Potential interviewees were contacted by phone or email

depending on their chosen contact information. At this time the purpose of the study was

further explained (beyond what was detailed on the survey consent) and subjects were

told what to expect and given the opportunity to agree to participate or decline. Subjects

had the opportunity to be interviewed at the Rutgers Psychological Clinic in Piscataway,

NJ, but all chose to be interviewed in their own homes or other locations that were

convenient for them, such as local coffee shops. Subjects were first asked to sign consent

forms and then to complete the Bem Sex Role Inventory and Relationship Satisfaction

Questionnaire. They were asked a series of non-obtrusive, open-ended questions about

their experience of shared parenting and how they view its impact on their gender role

identity and relationship satisfaction (see **Appendix A:** Interview Questions). Subjects

had the opportunity to stop and withdraw from the study at anytime, but each of the ten

subjects completed the entire interview. They were each compensated with $50 cash or

check.

CHAPTER IV

SURVEY RESULTS

Overview

Subject Characteristics – Survey

There were 305 attempted surveys, 234 (77%) of which were complete enough to determine the shared parenting score (less than 3 questions were left blank or given a "not applicable" response). Some surveys were incomplete; others were excluded because there were too many non-applicable answers for the parenting score to be completed. For example, if both parents were not living in the home for most of the respondent's childhood, a majority of the survey questions could not be scored.

While the respondents ranged in age from 18-70, there were a disproportionately large number of respondents in the 26-30 age-group, probably as a result of the large number of graduate students on the listservs used. The online nature of the survey may have excluded some older respondents who either did not know how to access the survey online or had technical difficulties with the site. Most of the respondents came from the listservs as opposed to web posting or paper newsletter, and as a result, the sample was most likely of a higher than average educational level and socioeconomic status.

The sample (respondents for whom parenting score was computed) was 77% female (182 individuals) and 23% male (52 individuals). The disproportionate number of females is likely due to the fact that psychology graduate students and psychologists, who

made up a large portion of respondents, are more likely to be female. Approximately 41% of the sample were between 26 and 30. Almost 2% were between 18 and 21, 19% were between 22 and 25, 15% were between 31 to 40, almost 10% were between 41 and 50, and 8.5% were between 51 and 60. Almost 5% were between 61 and 70, and there were no respondents over 70. About 60% of the respondents were under 30 and 40% over 30. The sample was 90% Caucasian; about 6% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander (14 respondents), 2% as Black/African American, about 7% as Hispanic, and one respondent as Native American or Alaskan Native. Almost 15% of the sample identified with a non-white racial category. One quarter of the sample identified as single, 47% identified as married or civilly united, 3% were divorced or separated, and about 5% identified as long-term partnered. Seventeen percent were in a serious relationship of over one year, and 4% had been in a long-term relationship for less than one year. One percent endorsed "other relationship." The low number of divorced participants should be noted as unusual and may be due, in part, to the youth of the sample.

One hundred fifty-nine respondents, or 69%, identified themselves as in relationships of more than one year, meeting criteria to be potential interview participants. One respondent who met criteria for shared parenting but listed her relationship status as "other" was excluded. Two other respondents who gave their contact information had shared parenting scores that would have made them potential interview participants, but they did not meet criteria for relationship status. Almost one-third of the sample (31%) indicated they have children, and of these, 59% indicated they "divide childcare tasks equally or almost equally between yourself and your partner."

Survey Analysis

Level and Degree of Shared Parenting

Shared parenting scores on the survey ranged from 1.10 to 3.81. Of 234 respondents whose surveys provided enough information to compute parenting score, nine attained a score above 3.0, indicating that father did more childcare than mother. The mean parenting score was 2.16, with a median parenting score of 2.12. Thus, for the average respondent, shared parenting still meant that mothers spent more time than fathers at parenting tasks.

Almost seven percent of the sample indicated their parents "almost always practiced shared parenting," while about 17% said their parents did so more often than not with their mother doing more overall, and 1% with their father doing more overall. Thus, 24% or almost one-quarter of the sample had some form of shared parenting. The researcher's threshold for shared parenting score may thus have been too stringent. One-quarter of the sample would rate their parents as almost or often sharing parenting, while less than 4% had shared parenting scores between 2.8 and 3.2. This may also indicate that the criteria for the subjects in terms of evaluating the level of shared parenting required a lower amount of sharing. For example, if fathers were more involved than is culturally normative, subjects may have indicated their parents often shared parenting, even if their mother clearly did a majority of parenting tasks. The fact that the interview sample was drawn from those who both had high parenting scores and indicated a high level of parenting on that question suggests they were chosen using the strictest criteria, despite the inclusion of scores between 2.6 and 2.8.

The most common response on the general question (34%) about level of shared parenting was that parents practiced shared parenting and traditional parenting in equal

parts, with mom doing more overall. Less than one percent chose this response with Dad doing more overall. Almost thirty percent indicated that their parents rarely practiced shared parenting and that Mom did more, while 2% chose this response with Dad doing more overall. Thus, it was slightly more common when fathers did more than mothers for them to be doing the majority of childcare than in a shared parenting situation. Ten percent chose "my parents never practiced shared parenting" with Mom doing more, and only 2 respondents ($< 1\%$) chose this option with Dad doing more.

A series of Pearson correlations were computed to address the relationship between shared parenting score, subject-indicated level of shared parenting, and several other demographic items including whether the subject had children, whether the subject practiced shared parenting with her or his own children, whether the subject's relationship met criteria for the study, subject age and gender, and whether the subject completed the survey anonymously. Due to the small number of representatives of minority groups, separate analyses were not performed on minorities. Instead, each subject's status as white or non-white/biracial was computed. Additionally, an Asian/non-Asian category was included because of the relatively large number of participants identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander, and preliminary analysis of the surveys which suggested Asians appeared more likely to have experienced shared parenting than other groups.

An inverse correlation was found between shared parenting score (M = 2.16, SD = .509) and shared parenting level (M = 3.22, SD = 1.07) as indicated by the question in which level of shared parenting was rated always, often, shared and non in equal parts, rarely, or never. The correlation, which was statistically significant at the .01 level,

r(233) = -.678, p < .01 suggests that both the score and question were addressing the same construct, and that people who indicated a high level of shared parenting were also likely to have a higher shared parenting score. While in theory, as shared parenting scores went even higher than 3, shared parenting level should start to lower in a curvilinear relationship, there were so few scores above 3.0 that this did not occur.

A weaker correlation was found between shared parenting level (M = 3.22, SD = 1.07) and the likelihood of respondents having children themselves (M = 1.686, SD = .465). At the .05 level, there was a positive correlation, r(222) = .190, $p < .05$, indicating that subjects with children were more likely to have had a higher level of shared parenting themselves as children. Correlational studies cannot provide information about whether a relationship is causal; there is the possibility that people whose parents shared parenting tasks more were more likely to choose to have children themselves. It is also possible that a third variable or another combination of variables accounts for the relationship between the experience of shared parenting and choosing to have children. Still, this is an interesting finding that warrants further attention. Given the weakness of the correlation, it may be that only at an extreme level of lack of parental sharing in childhood, respondents were less likely to have children. Those respondents who had children, not surprisingly, were also more likely to be in a relationship that met criteria for inclusion as interview subjects (M = 1.136, SD = .475) at the .01 alpha level, r(228) = .311, p = .05. Additionally, there was an inverse correlation between age and relationship meeting criteria, $r(221) = =.195, p < .01$, at the .01 alpha level. This would be expected, as older people are more likely to be married or in serious relationships.

Demographics of Subjects who Experienced Shared Parenting

Both shared parenting score (M = 2.16, SD = .509) and level (e.g. almost always practiced, often practiced, etc.) of shared parenting (M = 3.22, SD = 1.07) were found to be significantly correlated with age group (M = 3.556, SD = 1.413), $r(222) = -.135$, $p < .05$, $r(222) = .190$, $p < .01$, at alpha levels of .05 and .01 respectively. Parenting level was slightly more correlated with age than parenting score: as age went up, parenting level score went up, indicating less sharing. As age went up, parenting score went down, suggesting less shared parenting. These correlations may have been even stronger had the sample been more diverse in terms of age, and less concentrated around the 16-30 age group. This important finding suggests strongly that younger respondents rated their level of shared parenting higher, both in terms of an overall rating of the level of shared parenting, and their specific answers to questions about how their parents divided parenting tasks. It is possible that younger respondents may simply have rated their level of shared parenting higher rather than actually having had a higher level of shared parenting. However, a close analysis of the survey data suggests that younger respondents were actually more stringent in their criteria for rating their parents' level of shared parenting than older. In fact, the correlation may have been even stronger if not for the fact that younger respondents have come to expect a higher level of sharing, and so use more stringent criteria to rate their parents.

While there were only a few respondents under 22, in the 22-25 age-group there were 46. These applicants showed clear differences in response patterns from older groups. In reflecting on parenting at different phases of childhood, the most common response at all ages except 0 to 2 was that both parents worked outside the home,

beginning at 54% between ages 3 to 6, and moving to 78% by ages 15-18. The 22-25 group rated slightly more tasks as evenly shared than the general sample. In that group the only task where the most common response was that fathers did more than mothers was "handed down and enforced punishments." Still, this group's rating of overall level of shared parenting in childhood was about 24%, the same as the general sample. The percentage of parents who rarely and never shared parenting was also similar in this group to the general sample. These results are difficult to interpret, given that being younger correlated with more shared parenting. It may be due to the fact that because younger respondents made up the majority of the sample, they contributed to the average percentage of parents who always or often shared more, bringing the average up for the entire sample. However, it is important to note that while, overall, younger respondents had experienced more shared parenting, as those respondents had aged, up to 78% of their mothers were working, and yet, only 24% always or often experienced shared parenting. This suggests that even for the youngest respondents, whose mothers were most likely to be in the workforce, increases in father-involvement, while apparent, were not consistent with the increase in mothers' work outside the home.

The 26-30 year-olds were most likely to respond that "Mom did almost all," of a variety of tasks during ages 0 to 2 and 3 to 6, indicating less father involvement than the general sample. However, these young ages would be the most challenging for respondents to recall accurately. For this group, responses related to parents working outside the home were similar to the general sample, with 56% indicating both parents did so. Overall ratings of shared parenting were similar to the general sample, but this group made up the largest portion of that sample. This was also the most diverse age

group, at 76% Caucasian compared to 90% of the general sample. While the increase in endorsement of practicing shared parenting themselves compared to the general sample, at 57% of the 21 respondents who indicated they were parents, compared to 54%, in general, there was a correlation between the current sharing of parenting and younger age of respondent. Shared parenting of subject's own children (M = 1.413, SD = .475), was significantly correlated with age group at the .05 alpha level (M= 3.556, SD = 1.413), $r(69) = .259, p < .05$. It is important to note that this analysis focused only on the 70 respondents who indicated they have children, and thus the sample size is smaller. There was also a significant correlation at the alpha .01 level between age group and whether the subject had children (M = 1.686, SD.465), and between shared parenting level and whether subjects had children $r(228) = -.148, p < .05$. These correlations would be expected as older subjects would be more likely to have children.

The 31 to 40 age group maintained the pattern of mothers going back to work over time, with 56% working by the time their children were 15-18. But fewer of the mothers overall went back to work than, for example, the 78% who were working by this age range in the 22-25 sample. Again, fifty-seven percent of those in this group who are parents indicated they practice shared parenting themselves. In the 41 to 50 age group, the pattern of mothers going back to work as children aged is maintained but there is a dramatic shift between children's ages 7 to 10 and 11 to 14, from 40% working to 70% working. Other response patterns for this group were similar to the 26-30 group and the general sample, except for the current practice of shared parenting, which is higher in this group at 68% of the 22 respondents who indicated they had children. This result is unexpected, given the finding that young age was correlated with the likelihood of shared

parenting, and suggests the possibility that father-involvement increases with the age of the child, as the children of the parents in this age-group are likely older on average than those in the 26-30 age-group. Thus, while younger people are more likely to share parenting tasks in general, the sharing may peak when the parents are 41-50, because of the age of the children. It is also possible that this result is due to younger groups using stricter criteria to rate their own level of shared parenting. Those respondents 41-50 may be comparing themselves to older generations whose parenting was more drastically different.

Results begin to look more different for the 20 respondents who indicated they were age 51-60. These respondents endorsed "Mom did almost all" most frequently for the first three age categories, and only 5% endorsed that tasks were shared for any age group. Only at ages 15-18 did this group significantly endorse that mothers were working, and only 55% did so. This group endorsed only three tasks that parents shared equally: "attending games," "setting rules," and "enforcing punishments." No one in this age group said their parents always or often practiced shared parenting, with 60% endorsing either rarely or never. In this group, only 39% said they currently practice shared parenting. This is a dramatic difference from those ten years younger who were more likely than their younger counterparts to share parenting. This finding suggests that the spike in current shared parenting in those 41-50 is more likely due to their rating themselves highly compared to their very different older counterparts, while it is possible that they also shared more as their children aged out of infancy and toddlerhood. For respondents 61-70, ratings of shared parenting by age were similar to those 51-60, and at no age was "both worked outside the home" the most common response. Only 35% of

mothers were working outside the home when respondents were between ages 15 and 18. Ratings of overall level of shared parenting were similar to the prior age group. Only 30% of these respondents practiced shared parenting themselves.

In respondents under 30, 9% (as opposed to 6% in general) said their parents always practiced shared parenting, and 27% endorsed always or often as opposed to 23%. In respondents over 30, 2% endorsed always, with only 15% endorsing always or often. These results suggest that those under thirty are twice as likely to have experienced shared parenting, a finding in keeping with the correlational relationship established between shared parenting score and level and age. Age appears to be the strongest factor surveyed in determining whether someone will have experienced shared parenting.

Survey response analysis.

In terms of specific childcare tasks addressed on the survey, there were no tasks that fathers performed on average more frequently than mothers. More respondents selected "both parents shared equally" for "provided advice," "attended games or events," "played with you," "talked to you about your interests and experiences," "set rules," and "handed down and enforced punishments." As for all other tasks, the most common response was either "mom did most" or "mom did almost all."

Tasks that were most commonly rated "Mom usually, Dad sometimes" included "supervised you," "helped with homework," and "transported you to school or events." Tasks most commonly rated as "Mom almost always completed" included "comforted and soothed you," "prepared your meals," "contacted teachers or other involved professionals," "kept track of schedules and appointments," "helped you with bathing and personal grooming," "took you to doctor and dentist appointments," "read to you,"

"helped you get ready for bed," and "did your laundry." The only task which over 50% of the sample indicated as shared was "attended games or events." The tasks with the least amount of father-involvement were "did your laundry," "kept track of schedules and appointments," and "helped you with bathing and personal grooming."

The most common response for the question about which parent worked outside the home changed based on the age of the respondent. When respondents had been between 0 and 2, 70% of the sample indicated that Dad worked outside the home but not Mom. This percentage went down to 61% between ages 3 and 6. Between 7 and 10, both parents working became the more common response at 50%; however, 43% still indicated that Dad but not Mom worked outside the home. Between ages 11 and 14, both parents working went up to 62%, and between ages 15 and 18, it went up to 67% of the sample. In conclusion, during the respondents' infancy about 70% of their mothers were home, while between ages 15-18 about 70% of their mothers were employed. In terms of overall parenting tasks, almost 50% of the sample indicated "Mom did most, Dad did some" between ages 0 and 6, with about 35% indicating "Mom did almost all." These numbers remained relatively constant between ages 7 and 18 as well; however, "Mom did almost all" decreased to around 25%, and shared parenting increased slightly. This suggests that while mothers returned to work as their children got older, fathers did not compensate with increased time spent at childcare tasks.

Analyses of Specific Demographic Groups

An analysis was done to isolate survey respondents who endorsed that their parents always or often practiced shared parenting. They were about one-quarter of the sample. On average, these respondents differed from the total sample in that they were

more likely to indicate that their parents shared parenting tasks equally when they had

been between the ages of 7 and 18 (before age seven their responses were similar to the

general sample). Their answer patterns were similar with respect to parents working

outside the home, which suggests that shared parenting was not particularly related to

whether both parents were working outside the home. The answers of these respondents

differed most dramatically on the specific childcare tasks. For almost every task the most

common answer choice was "both parents shared equally." For these respondents with

shared parenting backgrounds, however, mothers were still more likely to prepare meals,

keep track of schedules, help with bathing and grooming, and transport them to

appointments. The only task in which this sample rated "Mom almost always completed"

was laundry.

Of this group, about 70% said their parents often practiced shared parenting, and

30% that they always did. Those who indicated they have children were more likely to

practice shared parenting themselves, with 67% doing so compared to the general sample.

They were equally as likely as the general sample to be in serious relationships. Seventy-

two percent of these respondents were under thirty years of age, as opposed to 60% of the

general sample, meaning that this group was younger on average. This group also had a

slightly higher proportion of male respondents, including 73% females as opposed to

77%. The racial break-down of this sample was similar to the general sample. Fewer of

these respondents chose to include contact information (43% compared to 50%).

Responses of males versus females in the shared parenting group were similar on most

items. However, women in this category were considerably more likely (75%) than men

(50%) to indicate that they currently practice shared parenting. This differed from the

general sample. The males in this group were on average slightly younger than the

females, while age ranges were similar for both genders in the full sample.

Gender.

Responses of females and males were similar in rating parents' work outside the

home, overall level of parenting involvement at various ages, and engagement in specific

parenting tasks. Women identified mothers as having a higher likelihood of taking care

of grooming, bathing, and laundry, and saw their mothers as slightly more likely to do

many of the parenting tasks. However, men and women provided similar estimates of the

overall level of shared parenting. For those who identified themselves as having

children, men and women were equally likely to say that they currently practiced shared

parenting. Seventy-one percent of the females met criteria for long-term relationships,

while only 62% of the males did. This difference may be related to the fact that the

males were younger overall. Gender was not correlated with shared parenting score,

level of shared parenting, or any other item, other than anonymity (M = 1.528, SD =

.500), which was correlated at the .05 level, $r(221) = =.167, p < .05$. Women were

slightly more likely to provide contact information than men.

Another analysis isolated those respondents who indicated they have children and

practice shared parenting themselves. Of this group 67% stated that they divided

parenting tasks equally or almost equally, compared to about 59% of the general sample

of subjects with children. Responses on specific questions related to the division of

childcare in the subjects' parents were similar to the general sample. This group had the

same gender breakdown as the general sample. Among those who had experienced

shared parenting, the same percentage of men and women said that they practice shared parenting themselves now.

Race.

Asian respondents reported slightly higher rates of shared parenting, and in contrast to the general sample, 50% of Asian respondents stated that their parents shared parenting equally when they had been between the ages 15 and 18. A Pearson correlation found no significant relationship between non-white status and white or shared parenting. However, when a separate analysis was performed comparing Asian status and shared parenting (M = 1.064, SD = .245), the correlation was significant at the .05 level, r(218) = .158, p < .02. This relationship was examined because of the relatively higher numbers of subjects who indicated they were Asian or both Asian and Caucasian. Where only 6% of the full sample indicated that their parents always practiced shared parenting, 14% of the 14 Asian respondents endorsed this item. Given that minority respondents were underrepresented in the general sample, the results may not be representative of Asian families in general.

Married participants' responses showed a very slight trend toward less father involvement than the overall sample. It is difficult to tease out whether this is related to the fact that these respondents are older than the general sample, or to their marital status, or some other factor. There were no obvious differences between the general sample and the responses of single participants or those of participants whose relationships met criteria to be interview subjects.

CHAPTER V

INTERVIEW RESULTS

Overview

The ten interviews were closely analyzed utilizing the McCracken Method. Interviews were examined closely as separate transcripts for notable words, phrases, and concepts. Later, interviews were analyzed as a group, and common themes were discerned in the areas of how and why parents divided childcare labor, the relationship between shared parenting and the parents' marital relationships and satisfaction, and the impact of shared parenting on the subjects' gender role identities, current relationship satisfaction, and current or intended parenting. Unless otherwise noted, themes reported here were present in several of the interviews.

Subject Characteristics – Interview

Almost all subjects had or were pursuing graduate degrees. They were well-educated and identified as middle-class or upper-middle-class. Five were recruited through graduate student listservs. Of these, three were pursuing a doctorate in clinical psychology, and two were in law school. One of these was pursuing a concurrent MD. Two subjects were recruited through personal connections with the interviewer, one at a talk given by the interviewer at a Unitarian Church, and two additional subjects were recruited by email but could not identify how they had come to receive the email. Six of the subjects were graduate students, one was a partially-retired researcher, another was an audiologist, another is an administrative assistant, and the last is an academic advisor at a

college. Eight subjects were female and two male, which was not surprising given that

the survey pool was largely female. Nine subjects identified as Caucasian, while one

identified as Caucasian and Asian/Pacific Islander. Since only ten subjects met even the

more flexible criteria for interview, it was not possible to choose a more diverse sample.

Three of the interview subjects were between 22 and 25, while five were between 26 and

30; one was 31 to 40, and one was 61 to 70. While the low age of the sample, and

particularly the concentration around the 26-30 age range reflects both the age of

graduate students, who were highly recruited, and the age range of the interviewer's main

contacts, younger age did correlate with having had shared parenting, and so it is not

surprising that subjects who met criteria for interview based on having had shared

parenting tended to be younger.

Seven of the subjects were married. One of these married between the survey and

interview portions of the study. The other three initially identified as "long-term

partnered," "in a serious relationship of over one year," and "in a serious relationship of

under one year." It was the "under one year" subject who became engaged between the

survey and interview portions of the study. Thus, upon interview, when subjects were

asked specifically about relationship satisfaction, all but one were in a relationship that

had been or would be longer-term. Three of the subjects had children. Four had

indicated on their survey that their parents shared parenting "almost always," while five

had chosen "more often than not." One subject indicated that his or her parents practiced

"traditional and shared parenting in equal parts."

Themes Relative to How and Why Parents Divided Childcare Tasks

There were clear themes in terms of how parents divided childcare tasks. As hypothesized, while each of the ten families did so differently, and for different reasons, all ten families made those decisions based largely on criteria other than traditional gender roles. Interestingly, according to the adults who were raised in these families, none of the families divided tasks based on a conscious attempt to avoid gender stereotypical roles. Unlike the motives in the Bem family, the intent to model gender-neutral behavior or to communicate a feminist or egalitarian message about gender role equality did not enter overtly into childcare labor division decisions. In terms of the criteria by which childcare labor was divided, four themes showed up frequently in the interviews: role flexibility, logistics/need, personality/personal strengths, and father-involvement.

These factors created arrangements in which the specific tasks mothers and fathers did varied dramatically from family to family. In some, there were clear tasks that were typically done by mother and father, respectively. In other families, tasks were almost all shared. In some families these arrangements changed over time, while in others they remained constant. Some families divided childcare not based on specific tasks but by times of the day or week, as the Bems did. For some families these divisions were discussed specifically, and in others they were described as occurring organically, without much overt discussion or planning. In some families, the division of labor, while shared, fell more along the lines of traditional female and male work, while in others it did not. However, all the families described flexibility in how work was divided.

Family characteristics.

Subjects are identified below by pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. Of the ten families of origin, nine had remained intact. The parents of one subject, Amy, (who indicated her age range is 22-25), were divorced when she was in high school, at which point she went to live with her father. (Families in which the parents were not cohabiting for a majority of the child's life were excluded as interview subjects). In almost half the families there was additional childcare assistance - typically for a brief period. One male subject's grandparents cared for him until preschool, and a female subject recalled that a grandfather who lived nearby would watch her after preschool until her mother got home. A female subject stated that her grandmother watched her and her sister for a year when her mother first went back to work when she was nine. Another male subject had a nanny until he was four, around the time his mother stopped working. The other subjects did not report any outside childcare assistance, and all of them downplayed the involvement of caretakers other than their parents. None felt other caretakers had played a major role or made a major impact.

All of the ten subjects have siblings. The following sibling constellations were described; two girls (2), one girl one boy (2), three boys (3), three girls (2), two girls one boy (3), four girls (4), four girls one boy (5), and the final subject had step-siblings who did not live in the home, but had nieces and nephews who did. Six of the families had more than two children in the home. The subjects whose family's parenting scores fell in the 2.6 to 2.8 range, the lower end of inclusion, did not share less; in fact, they reported more sharing and more overall equality. Subjects from more equal families may have had slightly stricter criteria in their minds for rating the level of sharing. A majority of

the families of the interviewees were living in suburban New Jersey while the subject was growing up; one subject was raised in Australia, two in suburban Colorado, and one in Milwaukee.

In terms of the overall level of sharing, there was one subject, Emit (age range 22-25) who described his mother as definitely doing more overall childcare than his father, despite his father's being involved. This changed over time, until his teen years when things were fifty-fifty. Emit rated his family as traditional and as sharing in equal parts. There were three families described as equally sharing in terms of the respondent's perception of time spent at childcare; among these there was a mix of division of childcare by traditional and nontraditional gender roles. The other six families were described as basically equal in terms of the subjects' perception of the involvement of mother and father. In these families, the division was based on factors other than gender.

Flexibility.

No matter how tasks were divided, each interview participant spoke about a fluidity of role. If one parent tended to take care of a certain task, the other was willing to step in if needed. One female subject, Jenna, (age range 61-70) described the division of labor in her childhood household as, "She did the cooking and cleaning, he did the grocery shopping, possibly slightly more masculine activities. If my mother needed he could do it. He did more outside activities, but she did do some gardening." There were other tasks Jenna described as split evenly between the parents, including discipline and advice-giving. She also stated that overall childcare was split evenly. The difficultly for Jenna in clearly delineating who did what, even though there were clearly some tasks one parent did more than the other, suggests a level of fluidity and flexibility.

Maura, who identified her age range as 31-40, reported that she was

disciplined by whichever parent was home. Many tasks were done by either

parent; however, she said she went to one parent for help with math and to the

other for spelling or writing.   Leslie (age range 26-30) described flexibility as

well, but in her case, almost all tasks were shared. "It was equal. They helped

each other with anything. Except he couldn't cook. I don't know if they made an

effort, I think it was just split like that." She described flexibility in terms of

either parent's stepping in to do basically all tasks but cooking.

The concept of flexibility was seen over and over when subjects described

the other themes related to division of childcare, especially dividing childcare

based on logistics in terms of work schedules and other needs.

Logistics/Work.

Logistics of family and work demands was another recurrent theme.   Most of the

mothers described by the interviewees worked less than full-time while parenting. Emit's

mother stopped working when she had him, the second of five children. Niya (age range

26-30) stated that her mother stayed home for six months after having her sister and for a

year after she was born, but then returned to work.   She was a teacher, however, and so

she had the summers off. Maura described her parents' work lives in a way that

highlighted change over time, inter-generational childcare practices, and attempts by both

parents to alter their work schedules for family life:

> My father worked a full-time job; my mom stayed home until we were in
> grade school, and she worked in the school where we were. Then she got
> a full-time job when we were older. Then she retired to watch her
> grandchildren. My father always had a full-time job and worked. When I
> was a baby he worked in New York. He quit that job and found a job

closer to home because he felt like he didn't see me… His job always had flexibility to allow him to meet us places or take us places.

In many of the families, mothers increased their level of work outside the home over time, and fathers, while working full-time, were described as having flexible jobs which allowed them to step in at home if needed.

It was common for subjects to attribute decisions about who would work at what to decisions about childcare. "After we got home from school it was her time until my Dad got home around six. We always had family dinner and then kind of after dinner was him time. Saturdays were usually his because she would run errands. Sundays were always a family day." This family was the best example of a specific, purposeful scheduling of childcare by time division. The subject, Debbie (age range 26-30) felt that logistics played the largest role of any factor in the division of childcare, emphasizing that the schedule reflected her mother's flexibility in her school job; her father worked for the state and so could get better healthcare benefits by working full-time. She believes her parents had made an explicit agreement that when they had children they would split things equally, but he would work more outside the home. When the children were sick, the parents would take turns staying home. Debbie felt that her parents did this because they approached their marital relationship democratically and because it made sense logistically, not because they were trying to impart flexible gender roles to the children.

For almost all of the families, work schedules, along with a general sense of what would work most efficiently, dictated decisions about dividing up

childcare labor. Rick, who identified his age range as 22-25, said his parents were both teachers who had divided tasks most based on "logistics… just the way things would work out." Andrea (age range 26-30) stated that her mother was a homemaker, but noted that her father would do yard work and grocery shopping on weekends. "My mother transported. I think it had more to do with who was available at the time. They would both do yard work, cooking, cleaning, discipline." Later, Andrea indicated that a few tasks were divided by gender, while others were divided by personality; for example, her father was better at helping with school, and her mother was better at giving advice. Debbie stated that her mom worked part time, mostly while she and her four sisters were at school.

Another female subject in the 26-30 age range, Darlene, stated that her father became disabled before she was born and could not always work full-time, and thus was home more with her than her mother. He took her to school, and typically made breakfast. Later, her parents owned a business that they ran together. In Darlene's family, work in and outside the home were both shared equally, and became intertwined. Her parents would share responsibility for carpooling, cooking, and cleaning. She also stated that logistics dictated most of the division of labor, as both parents did most tasks some of the time. For example, whoever got home first would cook dinner, and both parents did laundry. In Darlene's family, both partners had been unhappily married previously. She felt that both parents had learned from those experiences that they wanted things to be more equal. In particular, her mother had done all

household and childcare tasks in the prior relationship and did not want to do this again.

There were several subjects who described, to varying degrees, a system in which fathers' shift of childcare began after work. Jenna talked about how her mother had gone back to work when she was 9. Prior to that time, her father would take over when he arrived home from work, reading to her and her two sisters and bathing them. Leslie said her mother had worked part-time in the evenings, during which her father would take her and her brother to activities and then bathe them. When asked how tasks were divided in general, she stated "It was pretty much who was around at the time," and later said it was based "probably just on need." "My Dad was pretty laid back. He was fine with helping us with tasks that you associate a mom with doing. I think it was more just a matter of what needed to be done." Her father also had a "flexible job." When she was older her mother returned to full-time work.

The most common change over time in almost all the families (except the few in which the mother had worked full-time all along) was that mothers would gradually return to a longer and longer work schedule. For some families the way parents divided tasks also changed dramatically over time, while for others, it remained quite constant. Perhaps the best example of slow change came from Emit who said that when he was a young child his mother had done 75% of the parenting, and by his teenage years the division of labor had become 50/50. He said that flexibility increased over time such that there were fewer tasks that only one parent did. Emit felt this was because of societal and cultural changes that altered his parents' ways of looking at their relationship. Andrea

spoke about a time between ages 8 and 13 when her father travelled a lot and took on less

at home. In general, for families where moms returned to work over time, however,

subjects did not speak about fathers taking on more. In these families, despite working

full-time, fathers were still seen as having taken on about half of the childcare all along.

Personality.

Differences in personality and ability also played a strong role in choices about

how to divide childcare labor. In most of the families, choices about who would do what

kind of tasks were made, at least in part, on which parent excelled in or had interest in a

certain area. This was particularly true for discipline, academics, and advice-giving.

Emit stated, "Academics would be my dad… My mom was more household and

sometimes issues with friends. I could talk to both of them, but my mom was the best to

talk to." He felt strongly that it was important for parents to do what they did best. He

felt his success academically was due in large part to his father as having been the main

parent to deal with academics. Amy stated:

> I don't think they ever had a conversation about - ok this is how we are
> going to divide tasks. I think it just developed from their personalities.
> My father did not like confrontation; he is very laid back, so he was not
> the disciplinarian, my mother was. You would go to my father if you
> wanted something.

Amy also discussed how her father did most of the bathing and grooming and was better

at soothing and comforting the children. In this family, personality differences seemed to

result in the opposite of stereotypical gender roles.

In some cases, parents preferred gender stereotypical tasks, but the decisions were

still made based on preference, not gender assumptions.

> I don't know if they divided them up like "this is your job, and this is mine." I think it was more divided by who could do what at what time. There were definitely distinctions like my mom would always cook dinner and my dad would mow the lawn. As far as parenting would go they would do it together.

In this statement, Maura presents a more gender-typical division but also stated that her mother and father parented together. Some of the subjects' statements belied embedded ideas about gender division even as they spoke about equality. For example in this statement by Maura: "Not in a blatant way, but my mom always did the cooking and laundry and he helped with the cleaning. My Dad always cut the lawn… more masculine, but I know my father can throw a load of laundry in and my mom has cut the lawn. There is a split, but it is always flexible. My husband would throw some chicken nuggets in the oven." In addition to the idea of flexibility discussed above, this statement embodies some of the ambivalent messages about gender roles that were present in many of the families. While describing their fathers' involvement, many of the subjects stated that their fathers had "helped," indicating an assumption that certain tasks were really the mother's responsibility. For example, Andrea stated. "They didn't have a divide, but when he was home, my father would often help out." The way father-involvement was described was often indicative of how gender-traditional or non-traditional the subject or family was. For some of the subjects there was clear mixing of traditional and nontraditional, where dividing tasks meant more father-involvement than would be typical.

In other families, divisions based on strengths or personality fell less along gender lines; for example, Rick stated that because his Dad had been better at cooking, he usually did that. He also did yard work, and his mom helped more with homework.

Discipline and transporting were divided evenly, frequently depending on logistics.

Debbie stated that her mom had read and played with them, her father had played sports

and ironed her clothes. Her Mom had cooked and her Dad had cleaned. They both had

done laundry, and had alternated picking the children up from school. When asked how

they decided who would do what, she said, "I think who it came natural to. My Dad

couldn't cook, my mom couldn't play sports." Discipline was done more by her mother

because "she was more strict, but we were always close to her because my Dad is quite

reserved. So I would go to her for advice…" Darlene stated that because her father was

"non-confrontational and doesn't like arguing," her mother did all the disciplining. When

she was older she went to her father more for advice specifically because he was not a

disciplinarian. Her mother came to watch sports, but her father was the coach, and while

her father had been concerned about grades, her mother had done most of the motivating

her and helping her with homework. She stated that there had been "…no division based

on your role at all." Essentially, she felt that gender had had nothing to do with what

tasks were taken on by each. Leslie stated that her mom did cooking and her dad did the

bills. Mom was in charge of healthcare organization, but her dad would take her to the

appointments. Dad had helped more with homework because she would cry, and her

mother "didn't deal as well with that."

For all the families, the parents' personal strengths and personalities affected their

choice of tasks. For some, this meant more involvement from dad, but still some

gendered division of tasks, and for other families it meant that personality factors

completely outweighed gender in such decisions. For families in which personality and

personal strengths were the strongest predictor of the division of labor, tasks tended to be

more divided, with parents doing different jobs, but with some flexibility. For families

where logistics of work and family life dominated, divisions tended to be more along the

lines of time, with both parents doing the same tasks at different times. There were no

subjects, however, who described only one of these themes as being important. All the

families were described as operating out of some mix of logistics and personality. Most

families used both of these methods to divide tasks, and since all the families showed

flexibility, there pattern was never set in stone. Even in families where there was still

some assumption of gendered responsibility for certain tasks, flexibility, logistics, and/or

personality were stronger predictors of how labor would be divided.

Father-Involvement.

At least half the subjects felt that their father's desire to be involved was a strong

element in the decision to share parenting tasks. In several of the families, rather than an

arrangement made by the parents or a desire on the mother's part for equal parenting, the

father's desire to play a strong role was the main impetus behind shared parenting. In

response to a question about why her parents shared parenting, Andrea said, "I think it

had more to do with my father. He always wanted to help." "My father wanted to be

involved also so he would do the cooking and yard work. It was conscious of them to

separate who was going to go to work or stay home. They did housework together."

This subject indicated more of a mixture between traditional and non-traditional division

of labor. Her mother was a homemaker, and the main impetus behind the more equal

division of childcare appeared to be the involvement of her father when he was not

working. "They had pretty traditional gender roles. My mom was very happy to get to

stay home." The few families where the father's desire for involvement was the main

factor in sharing tended to be the more traditional families.

Two subjects mentioned mother-expectation of sharing as a very strong factor in

the sharing of parenting. Darlene stated that her mother had been in a very unequal

marriage and did not want that again. Amy said, "I don't think my Mom would settle for

someone who wouldn't help with the tasks. But my Dad wanted to be involved with us."

In this case, both father-involvement and mother-expectation were factors. A related

theme that came up in two of the interviews was mother-deficit. In each of these cases,

in addition to a strong desire for father-involvement, the subject described a maternal

deficit which was mitigated by the high level of father-involvement. In Debbie's case,

her mother was physically abusive while she was younger. In Amy's, her mother was

simply less inclined toward being nurturing and the father was more inclined in that

direction. Interestingly, both Debbie and Amy felt that father-involvement was the major

factor in the decision to split tasks.

Impact of Shared Parenting on Subject's Gender Role Identity

None of the subjects reported that ideas about gender roles, whether traditional or

non-traditional, were overtly discussed in their families. However, all felt that gender-

role non-conformism had been modeled to some degree. Interestingly, Jenna, the oldest

of the ten subjects was the only one who felt that her parents had been purposefully or

consciously trying to defy gender norms. She stated "They were appalled by the strict

adherence of the gender role," and yet said they modeled this, never addressing it

directly. For some subjects, traditional and nontraditional gender roles were modeled,

while for others roles were mostly non-traditional. These messages were covert across the board and never explicitly discussed, as in they were in Bem family.

In terms of their own gender role identities, most of the subjects identified as either a mixture of traditional and non-traditional or mostly non-traditional. None identified as mostly traditional. Most of the subjects made connections between their parents' modeling of gender flexibility in parenting and their own less traditional gender identities. The subjects who received more mixed messages about gender identity, or who came from families where traditional roles were mixed with role flexibility, tended to exhibit a more mixed gender identity with traditional and non-traditional aspects. Amy stated that she was previously a less traditional female but is currently staying home with her infant daughter and sees herself as more traditional. Regarding the messages her parents sent about gender identity, she stated, "They wanted me to go to college and excel and they never made me feel like the most important thing was to have children and raise them." She also indicated that her father had told her she needed to learn to change the oil in her car herself, which she saw as a communication about gender flexibility. She stated that she also learned from her family that "men can be sensitive and things like that." Amy's Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) score indicates she has a feminine gender identity. Rick stated about his parents dividing childcare based on logistics rather than gender, "I saw anybody can do anything." He also felt most of the messages about gender flexibility had come through modeling, noting that the message was "that you can do anything you want." He continued, "My mom taught me how to throw a baseball… There wasn't any clear set role, so it wasn't like this is the man's world and this is the woman's role." In terms of his own gender role, Rick stated, "I would say I am pretty

flexible. I do most of the outside stuff but I have no problem asking for help." Much like Amy, Rick seemed to feel that his family had taught him that he has the option of taking on a variety of roles, but he felt he was more likely to do more traditionally masculine activities. Rather than viewing childcare tasks as neutral, he still clearly viewed them as gendered. "I would say less traditional, I have no problem cooking or doing laundry… Because my parents were flexible, I am flexible." Rick seemed to view traditionally female tasks as something one would take on if needed, but still attached a gendered expectation to them. His BSRI was undifferentiated, suggesting that he may have been left identifying less with either gender than most people.

Maura described flexibility in her family of origin, along with some more traditional messages. She has taken on a similar approach to child-rearing. "I am the only female in the household, so I do all the cooking. My husband helps with the cleaning. I know if I ask for help my husband will step in, but a part of me enjoys doing that for my husband and children." Maura, one of the more traditional in terms of gender role, scored feminine on the BSRI. Emit described a similarly flexible approach by his parents, but also noted certain areas in which messages were more traditional. "I guess what I can say is my Dad always pushed me to academics… that a man should have a more lofty job and be a breadwinner. My mom didn't push me into getting good grades." Where the other male subject's BSRI was undifferentiated, his was androgynous, suggesting that he identifies strongly with both genders.

Jenna also reported that she had gotten messages about flexibility from her parents, but also had received some more traditional ideas about gender. She stated "There were issues about the fact that my mother was earning and that affected my

father's ego a little." She also talked about her brother's not being "expected to do womanly jobs around the house." Unlike the above subjects, Jenna became more egalitarian in dividing childcare tasks than her parents, even to the point that her husband did more childcare than she, due to the flexibility in his work schedule. Her BSRI came out masculine, suggesting that she identifies more with the masculine than the feminine role. Interestingly, Jenna has a daughter whose husband is a stay-at-home father while her daughter completes a residency and fellowship. She reports that "it has taken a bit of psychological toll on him that his wife has a job and he is staying home." Despite the passing along in this family of fathers having mixed feelings about the sharing of work outside the home, rather than a mixed approach to traditional roles being passed on, Jenna's family has become less and less traditional with each generation.

For other subjects, while their family's roles were still somewhat traditional, their own gender identities had moved more in the non-traditional direction. Andrea described mixed messages about gender roles in her family, stating, "Since my father participated so much when he got home I think I got this message that women should stay home but then the other side was men should help out equally around the house." Later she stated:

> I think I would be more on the masculine side and that is simply because masculinity has more to do with strength. I do identify as female and am proud of that identify. I am put in leadership roles more though and that is because I like to lead people. I don't think that has to do with gender.

Andrea later said, "I think because my father took such an active role, it made me mimic him more than my mother." While in some of the families, subjects appeared to take on a more mixed stance toward their own gender identity if messages in the family were mixed, Andrea appears to have become less traditional as a result of father-involvement. She perhaps finds herself more similar to her father and his style than to her stay-at-home

mother's. This may have had as much to do with personality as with gender roles. "I also saw my mother as just less of a character in the family because my father was just so strong. I got to do a lot with my dad. I didn't really want to be that, so I modeled myself after my father." She said her father had had the final say when it came to discipline, which she felt "was weird." Andrea appeared to view her father's role in the family as more appealing, whether because of his stronger personality, or a male role which afforded more power and options, or a combination of the two. Not surprisingly, Andrea also received a masculine designation on the BSRI. Jenna and Andrea, whose families were more mixed in gender attitudes, and who became less traditional than their families, both tested as masculine.

A third female subject, Darlene, was rated masculine on the BSRI. She described her family as having untraditional gender roles, which had been passed on. She stated, "Even though you have modern-day homemakers, I don't know, I can't imagine growing up thinking that that's what I was built to do versus it being both my parents working together, whether it was here or there or running their business together, I think I would be a completely different person it I hadn't seen that all the time." Darlene feels strongly that her parents' sharing of childcare and work outside the home affected her gender identity. "I would have hated to grow up thinking my role as a wife is cooking, cleaning, and laundry, and he would go to work and pay the bills," she continued. She also felt that she had been given the message that both sexes are equal, and she said she learned to be very independent. Darlene feels she currently approaches being a mother differently because of her parents' modeling. She views this as just one part of her identity, something separate from who she is as a person.

Leslie stated about the overall message about gender roles, "I think a mixture because they did more that suited them." For Leslie, who reported that traditional tasks had been done by one parent, childcare arrangements were chosen not according to traditional gender roles, but rather preference for a given task. She had a difficult time identifying her own gender identity because her view was rather similar. "I don't think of myself that strongly one way or the other." Leslie bases her identity on her "interests and talent," and said she is probably at the traditional end of the non-traditional spectrum. She did say she fits the female role more than the male, but then she specified that this has less to do with specific task choices and more to do with how she relates to people. Leslie does not have children but envisions herself "the same way as far as being the more sensitive, nurturing… As far as raising them hopefully not to think in terms of gender roles but what works for them." Leslie feels particularly connected to one aspect of the female role in childrearing; she takes on a flexible stance for the rest. Interestingly, despite her mixed presentation, Leslie's BSRI confirmed her statement that she identifies more as female.

Another subject, Debbie, found she had a difficult time pinning down her gender role identity.

> I am proud of the things I can do that a lot of girls can't. I don't know if they weren't taught or what, instead of feeling ashamed, I am proud of that. At the same time I feel I am not as feminine as I could be… I feel like I can switch. My husband sometimes says one day I'm mowing the back yard, and then I can shower and put on makeup, a pretty dress, and go to dinner. I like that it unites the situation and I don't have a problem going in between. I think specifically that I didn't develop a gender role vision because they shared the jobs and crossed so many gender role expectations.

Interestingly, Debbie, who seems to have apprehensions about identifying with either gender, came up undifferentiated on the Bem Sex Role Inventory.

Niya described herself as relating more to the masculine gender identity. She learned from her parents that "both sexes could do both things" and said "I don't think you need to stay in the roles. Now that we are having a baby, my husband does more around the house." She went on to say, "I have always had more male friends than female… I always want a nice car. I get along better with males because it is more laid back." However, Niya also described herself as sometimes feeling like she has to be a mother figure to her husband, and said "he wants me to stay home with the baby but I want to work and have my own money."   Unlike those of most of the subjects, Niya's BSRI was discordant with her self-report, characterizing her as feminine.

Debbie talked about how her flexible gender role grew out of her parents' egalitarian parenting as well as out of her wanting to differentiate herself in a family with four girls.

> I was more the tomboy. When the Saturday morning class came for woodworking it was no big deal. There really wasn't that division because there wasn't a division between my parents… my dad was always softer spoken and gentle. With the four of us girls, we had to find our own place if we had gone into the gender role for females, we had to do something a little different.

Debbie's family was quite egalitarian and based the division of labor mostly on logistics. She tested as feminine on the BSRI. While she described her gender role as flexible, some mixed feelings came out in her description of her current relationship, in which she feels the division of labor is more traditional than she would like. It is possible that Debbie experiences some ambivalence, identifying

more as female, but wanting her relationship to be more like her parents' flexible
one.

Sharing of Childcare and the Parents' Relationships

In addition to affecting the subjects' gender identities, it was clear that the
experience of shared parenting had influenced their later relationships and their own
parenting strategies. Many of the subjects viewed the sharing of parenting tasks by their
parents as growing organically out of the type of relationship they had, frequently
egalitarian, in which sharing occurred on many levels, not just parenting, and
communication was good. For Jenna, equal parenting was seen as derived from her
parents' intellectual and egalitarian approach to family life. "They were bookish, keen
for their children to make their own choices, split their roles up, perceived themselves as
well-rounded." Her statement also suggests that her parents divided childcare tasks in
part to impart flexible gender roles in the children. Debbie alluded to a stance that
pervaded her parents' relationship and approach to family life: "I think when they got
married and decided to have kids they were very democratic so they were always taking
equal parts in college and everything… when they decided to have kids they would both
take a part in it."

Several subjects indicated their parents' sharing of parenting emerged out of a
respectful relationship in which much was shared. In responding to a question about
whether her parents made a conscious decision to share parenting, Darlene stated:
"I don't see my parents sitting down saying we want it to be even so our kids see it and
be that way. Maybe they sat down and said we want them to see us getting along and this
is the way to do it." This subject suggests that rather than passing along flexible gender

roles purposefully, her parents may have taken on flexible gender roles because for them that was the way to have the kind of successful relationship they wanted to pass along to their children.

Maura described the fact that the sharing of parenting tasks resulted from good communication between her parents. "They shared the discipline… My parents never kept anything from each other." When asked why her parents approached childcare equally, she stated, "If I had to guess, I would think it would be an extension of or reflection of their marriage, because they as a couple share everything and work together. They are a team in their marriage and how they care for each other they carried over to the family." Maura sees a clear tie between the type of relationship her parents had and the way they approached parenting.

A related theme that came up in about a third of the interviews was that family work was shared not just between the parents but with the children as well. Several of the subjects indicated, in describing how tasks were divided, that they and their siblings had a lot of chores, and in some cases took part in the care of other siblings. Emit stated, "I don't think they said 'you do this, I do this.' We all helped out. My parents just conveyed the importance of helping out if and when we can." Andrea saw her parents' sharing of tasks and desire to teach the children to be independent at an early age as related. Finally, Maura talked about the fact that most activities in her family were done as a family. She saw the sharing of parenting tasks as stemming from this general family stance. "My brother and I were always into sports so they would come to every practice, every game, but when we both had a game at the same time, they would split up, one to one, one to the other. I have memories of doing everything as a family." This subject

emphasized that it was hard to distinguish who was doing which tasks because they did most things together.

Shared Parenting and the Subjects' Relationship Satisfaction

Since subjects frequently viewed their parents' choice to share parenting as related to the general success of their marriages, it is not surprising that the subjects viewed shared parenting and the sharing of general family tasks as a part of successful relationships for themselves. Subjects all saw their parents' egalitarian relationships as having had an impact on their relationships later in life in some way. All the subjects but the one whose parents had eventually divorced described their parents as having had a good relationship, and all the subjects saw their parents' sharing of parenting specifically as having had some impact on their own romantic relationships. For many of the subjects the impact came in their choice of a partner who was also non-traditional or committed to sharing parenting or other tasks equally. Rick felt that his parents had taught him "the importance of things being equal if it is going to work out." He views sharing and equality in a relationship as necessary to its success. He does not have children but feels family tasks in his relationship are split based on logistics; for example, he gets home earlier so he makes dinner. He feels they will also approach parenting tasks equally if they have children. Leslie, who recently married, felt she already sees signs that she is following the path her parents took. "I think we are pretty similar already in how we handle tasks. We do certain things that suit us better." When asked about her choice of a partner, she said, "Yes, that is what I was looking for in a partner." Leslie, who felt she is more feminine in terms of nurturing but is flexible in other areas, said she already sees her husband as more authoritative with their dogs, while she tends to feel sorry for them.

However, she believes parenting tasks will be largely shared if they have children. She would consider working part-time as her mother did. This subject, as well as several others, sees the sharing of tasks as part of a healthy relationship.

Andrea, who had a stay-at-home mother and very involved father, felt her family instilled in her a sense of choice about how to organize work and parenting.

> I think my family made me comfortable with myself to go out and work and find a partner okay with me being at home, but we can understand we are equally responsible for supporting each other. I think it has been incredibly helpful, especially with my dad doing a lot of the housework. It helped me shift as I go out and work full time and come home and do some laundry.

She also stated that when they have children they plan to divide tasks as equally as possible. Because her fiancé currently works from home, she feels he would be home with the children more. Andrea seems to be replicating her parents' division of labor, but with her in the position her father was in - being the breadwinner outside the home but also taking on tasks in the home. All these subjects reported making choices about the type of partner they wanted based on a wish to replicate the egalitarian division of labor in their families of origin.

Other subjects felt they had sought a partner who was similar in personality to a parent, but noted that the partner ended up also being as egalitarian as their parent. Amy said, "I think that I looked for somebody like my dad in a partner... Being a new parent makes me think of my own parents, and how our tasks are split. I didn't think 'I want somebody who is going to bathe my child,' but I looked for someone who had the qualities of my father." Amy, whose parents later divorced, felt that she was able to replicate the sharing of parental tasks she had seen with her parents, but could improve

upon the communication issues that had caused problems in their relationship. She went on to say, "I think I did learn from my dad to be with someone willing to take care. He almost treated us like this is what you should expect." Amy described her current relationship as very egalitarian. She currently stays home with her infant daughter, but plans to return to graduate school. She said that when her husband arrives home, he wants to do everything for the baby that she does while he is gone. Maura, who described her family as doing everything together also felt she chose a partner similar to her father, who turned out to approach parenting similarly as well. She said they have not discussed the division of labor in their own family, but it has become egalitarian organically to the point where they both do most tasks some of the time. She feels her parents' approach to child-rearing has had a very large impact on her own.

Jenna felt her parents' marriage made her not only seek an egalitarian relationship, but also be wary about certain pitfalls. "That tension of my parents over income made me conscious of that possibility that some men can be threatened by a woman. I always intended to work… We always knew I would work and he would have to do some of it." Jenna stated that her husband spent equal time at childcare and that they both expected as much. While she did not describe her husband as threatened by her working, she feels her daughter's husband, a stay-at-home father, has some of those feelings.

Others felt their parents' modeling affected the way they approached their relationships with partners and, for some, the way they divide parenting tasks themselves. Debbie, who articulated some confusion about her own gender role, compared her relationship favorably to her parents' in some areas and unfavorably in others. Her

parents' message about romantic relationships was "You take care of each other however it works." She said they had taught her to be prepared to pay for herself on dates and to take care of herself in general. This subject is not 100% satisfied with the division of labor in her current relationship, saying she gets unhappy sometimes that she is doing more than her husband. "I have this complex that I should have dinner ready and have things done around the house." She also said she feels her parents' relationship is always in the back of her mind, especially in terms of "that exchange that my parents always respected each other's like and dislikes" as well as her and her husband's "tendency to communicate a lot."

Darlene felt her parents' relationship taught her what was possible in terms of connectedness and communication. "I see how they just were so in tune and really best friends with each other all the time, and always supportive. Seeing it every day, I knew it was possible to function with another person that way all the time." She felt her parents' messages about relationships were more through modeling and a communication to "have respect for yourself and what you want and are willing to give." She stated, "I have never been with someone who tried to hold me back." Darlene described an approach to her child and step-children that is similar to her approach to romantic relationships. She tries to maintain her own identity and remember who she is. "I don't like to hear the other moms talking about their day and how drained they are and everything is 'he goes to work and I have to do all this'." She feels she is able to maintain balance and a sense or her own identity because she and her husband share parenting tasks. She described her current relationship as quite egalitarian, stating, "Now when we clean I will clean the kitchen while he is cleaning the living room. He will cut the grass while I'm doing the

laundry." However, when she was first with her husband she took on a "pleasing role" and it "went against everything I had known." For Darlene, it took time to form the type of relationship she had seen in her parents and wanted for herself.

Niya (26-30) felt that her parents' marriage did not influence her choice of a partner, and yet she still finds herself in a similar relationship. She stated that she and her husband do most family tasks together, but that her husband tends to do more of the cleaning. They do not have children yet.

Parents' Motivation for Shared Parenting

Most of the subjects had a difficult time accounting for their parents' motivations for sharing parenting equally. While many of them felt that their parents had shared because it worked out logistically or because they had had egalitarian relationships prior to having children, most subjects did not seem to be aware of many earlier influences; for example, the parents' own families or political influences. The oldest subject, Jenna, who felt her parents were purposefully invested in bucking social norms, grew up in Australia. She felt that Australian cultural norms did not impact her parents' decision to share parenting because different cultural forces cancelled each other out. While she observed that men in Australia were less driven to perform in their careers and more available to be at home, there was more of a macho cultural role for men. She attributed her parents' political views to their being well-educated intellectuals. Only one other subject related cultural or religious views to her parents' choice to share parenting. She described her father's German-Lutheran culture as "Work as hard as you can until you die." She felt this was part of why her father did so much work both in and outside the home.

Other subjects talked briefly about their parents' experiences of parenting, but tended not to see those as a significant influence on them. Andrea said her grandparents were more traditional than her parents, but stated that her father's desire to be involved was the main factor in her parents' style, rather than trying not to be like their parents. Darlene saw her parents' previous unsuccessful marriages as a factor in their desire to have a more egalitarian relationship. Another subject stated that because her father's mother had died young, he was "very gentle, nurturing." He may have modeled himself after his own father.

Positives and Negatives of Shared Parenting

In general, the subjects had a difficult time articulating negative aspects of having had parents who shared parenting tasks equally, but they did mention a variety of positives. Leslie stated, "It never felt like we were a chore to them." She felt the shared parenting made her childhood easy, and said she has no memories of her parents arguing. She felt her parents could enjoy the time with the children rather than feeling burdened. Amy made a similar statement; "I am wondering if that is why they didn't get burned out from parenting… They never really made me feel like a burden." This subject feels the sharing of parenting prevented either parent from becoming overloaded and resentful. She went on to say, "A huge benefit was seeing two people doing those things rather than one doing the same thing all the time. In terms of caring for us, I also learned that men can be sensitive... In terms of drawbacks, I don't know if there are any. If they are shared then both people should be feeling kind of equal." Almost all the subjects saw the modeling of flexible gender roles as a positive, and many also talked about the positive aspects of seeing an equal relationship, or, more generally, a good relationship.

Jenna stated that one benefit was getting the best from both parents. This was a common theme. Some subjects emphasized that if one parent had a limitation, the other was there to step in. Others stressed that because parents have different strengths, children get more overall when they are exposed to both. Maura stated, "Benefits are really good modeling… you could go to one of them if you had something you were more comfortable with." She had stated her family was very close and did most things together. She felt this aspect of her family, which was related to her parents' sharing of parenting, was a positive overall, but had also been difficult, in that "They were in every aspect of your life – all of them." Emit said, "Not only does it help in the relationship, it teaches the children the importance of doing a fair equal share of responsibilities." This subject mentioned a possible downside; if one parent is better at one task, such as helping with education, and the parents still split it 50/50, the child may suffer. He seemed to feel that splitting tasks based on strengths was better than splitting them up just for the sake of equality. Andrea talked about a similar drawback, that the parent who was home with her during the day was not necessarily the better parent; she also stated that some tasks fell between the cracks. She added "I got to know my parents very well… the benefits outweighed the drawbacks."

Subjects were also asked about how peers had responded to their unconventional families. None of the subjects reported any negative responses from peers. Several talked about friends being surprised when their fathers were home a lot or very involved, and others described this as something their friends enjoyed and saw as novel. Amy talked about her father getting more of a reaction than her mother when he walked the baby stroller. Rick said "I had the cool parents." He described having a very diverse group of

friends with various family arrangements, but in general his friends thought the equality

in his home was a good thing. Debbie also did not feel her peers responded poorly to her

family, but said she felt more comfortable with friends who had parents who both

worked. Maura stated "it is actually a little weird to me if I see my friends or friends'

parents thinking the roles should be separated." She felt her peers saw that as a positive

thing.

Two of the subjects described a negative reaction from other family members to

the sharing of parenting tasks. Niya stated "My grandmother actually criticized my

mother a lot for not taking care of my father like she thought she should be." Her

grandmother was reportedly distressed that when she was young she already knew how to

dress herself and did not need help. Her grandmother appeared to disapprove of her

mother's not being more involved in household and childcare tasks than she was.

Bem Sex Role Inventory and DAS-7 Results

The Bem Sex Role Inventory provides a masculinity and femininity score that can

be compared to a normative sample calculated in 1978 on Stanford University Students,

which has been shown to continue to be valid today. The median femininity score for

females in that sample was 5.10 and for males 4.60. The median masculinity score for

males was 5.1, and for females was 4.8. Those with femininity scores below the median

and masculinity scores above the median are considered masculine. Those with

masculinity below and femininity above are considered feminine, as defined in Bem's

original work. Those with both scores above the median are considered androgynous,

and those with both scores below are considered undifferentiated, according to the 1975

additions of Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp, which divided those with two high or two

low scores into separate categories. In the normative sample, for females, 39% would be classified as feminine, 30% as androgynous, 18% as undifferentiated, and 12% as masculine. Our small subject pool yielded four feminine females, three masculine females, and one undifferentiated female. Interestingly, rather than producing more androgynous females as a result of having experienced shared parenting, our sample produced no androgynous females, but more masculine females than would have been expected.

For males, in Bem's original samples, 12% were considered feminine, 42% masculine, 20% androgynous, and 27% undifferentiated. Our sample contained only two men. One identified as androgynous and the other as undifferentiated. In our small sample, it appears females were more likely to identify as masculine than females in the general public, but were still most likely to identify as feminine. Our females all identified as either more strongly masculine or more strongly feminine, rather than undifferentiated or androgynous. The two males, however, either identified strongly with both genders, or neither.

A study by Hunsley (2001) confirmed the construct validity of the DAS-7 short-form of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, providing evidence that it differentiates between distressed and adjusted couples as well as the longer version of the measure. Hunsley tested 122 couples, finding mean scores of 26.2 (SD=4) for non-distressed couples and 15.7 (SD=4.2) for distressed couples. The scores for the ten interview participants were as follows: 31, 31, 30, 29, 28, 27, 26, 25, 23, and 21. All the couples except for two fell within one standard deviation of the non-distressed range or higher. None of the couples fell within the distressed range, and three of the couples fell approximately one standard

deviation above the non-distressed mean. While this subject pool is not large enough to

be analyzed statistically as a group, the fact that all the scores fell within the non-

distressed range, none fell within the distressed range, and the average score (27.1) falls

at just about the mean for non-distressed couples, suggests that these participants are less

distressed than a general sample of couples.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Overview

This chapter expands upon the data analysis provided in the previous chapter, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to draw conclusions about the implications of the study results. The discussion is geared toward mental health professionals who may be advising couples and parents about the advantages of certain parenting styles, in terms of both marital relationships and childrearing, and toward men and women who may be considering equally shared parenting. It also speaks to mental health professionals who may be assisting adults in understanding the impact of gender roles, particularly in terms of gender role identity and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, this discussion addresses policy-makers who would be in a position to improve the conditions of work-life balance such that shared parenting could be expanded.

Realities of Shared Parenting and Future Research

Shared Parenting in Practice

This study found that families where parents attempt to divide parenting tasks equally or near equally, according to criteria other than gender roles, are still unusual. About one quarter of the subjects stated that their parents practiced shared parenting always or often, but it is important to keep in mind that the majority of the sample were

in their twenties and thirties. Had the sample represented all age groups equally, the likelihood of having experienced shared parenting may have been lower. By far the clearest demographic factor correlating with shared parenting was age. Younger respondents were significantly more likely to have experienced shared parenting. Also, the younger the participants, the more likely they are to say that they currently practice shared parenting.

Two important caveats should apply to future research in terms of correlating age with increases in shared parenting. First, it appears that younger people, particularly those under forty, may use stricter criteria to judge their level of shared parenting than older respondents. This is likely because shared parenting has become more common, and so a higher level of sharing would be necessary to reach the respondent's threshold for making this designation. Those currently between forty and fifty appeared to use the least strict criteria because they view their own parenting as so different from that of their parents. These differences in criteria for what constitutes a notable degree of sharing could result in an under-representation of the level of change in terms of sharing, and suggests that the more specifically shared parenting can be operationalized in future research, the better chance subjects of different age groups will use similar criteria. Results will thus reflect true differences by age. Additionally, parents who have teenagers (likely to fall within the forty-to-fifty age group) will be more likely to share parenting equally because parents with teens tend to share the most. This must be taken into account when comparing level of sharing over different ages. Younger people who will ultimately share more as their children age may rate themselves as less equal while their children are infants.

Despite these potential pitfalls; the trend is clear, younger people are more likely to have had shared parenting. The survey used in this study appears to have been useful in that it asked respondents to rate specific tasks at specific ages. This type of questioning was critical in order to assess changes over time as children age or family circumstances change. Future research could further refine questions so as to leave even less room for interpretation and further operationalize shared parenting. Studies comparing just two age groups of children or two age groups of parents could target specific tasks that would likely be performed; for example, for elementary school children. Such comparisons could tease out differences based on child age, as well as generational difference in groups of parents at different ages. Because subjects in this study had to be at least 18, it was not possible to assess whether levels of shared parenting have continued to increase with younger parents, and to what extent. The data do suggest that the parents surveyed are much more likely to rate themselves as currently sharing parenting than their parents.   This suggests that shared parenting may, in fact, be even more common now. Further research questioning parents about their parenting could target younger children not old enough to report what type of parenting they are receiving. Studies comparing reports of parents to their children's reports would be helpful in determining just how similar parents' and childrens' views of the level of sharing in a family are.

While the results clearly suggest that shared parenting is becoming more common, this must still be considered a gradual rise, dissimilar to the dramatic rise in mothers working outside the home that was also quite clear from the survey data. While for the youngest respondents, about three-quarters indicated that both parents had been

working outside the home by the time they were teenagers, still only one-quarter were experiencing shared parenting. This suggests that for about half of families, the "second shift" paradigm is still very much a reality. Mothers in these families were working outside the home, particularly as children aged, but remained primarily responsible for child-rearing. This suggests that gender roles have changed more dramatically for women than for men, particularly in terms of public and private sphere pursuits. While women clearly experience strain due to the second shift responsibilities, they likely experience less strain in terms of the impact of less traditional female pursuits (work outside the home) than men experience when pursuing private sphere work, namely childcare. As men have not made shifts in involvement within the home that match those that women have made into the workforce, one important area for inquiry would be the barriers to males' involvement in childcare. Role strain in men would be an important area to consider. How difficult is it for men in terms of cultural expectations and reactions to make the choice to share parenting tasks? Economic realities must also be considered. One reason for men's not increasing time spent at home may be that it has become more difficult for families to survive on just one income. In addition, the way we approach and structure work in our culture has not shifted in order to make two parents working and caring for children more realistic. Parental leave laws and workplace culture make maternity leave more feasible for women in many instances.

In this example, as children aged, mothers spent more time outside the home, and fathers became more involved in parenting. Again, it is important to note the lack of proportionality in these shifts. While a large majority of mothers were increasing their time working outside the home as children aged, a smaller segment of fathers in our

survey were increasing their time spent parenting. One of the interview subjects, for example, rated his parents as equally sharing parenting by the time he was a teen because his father became much more involved as he aged. This type of family may be representative of some slow societal shifts. Mothers have taken on a second shift in large numbers, as father-involvement increases slowly. However, the increase in mothers working outside the home says less about father-involvement than about the increased independence of children. This study suggests that it is children's lessening needs over the span of childhood that allows mothers to increase their public sphere involvement.

Despite the relatively small increase in father-involvement as children age proportional to mothers returning to work, this is an important trend to note, as it speaks to the motivation of fathers to be involved in childcare. Ideas about who should parent, who is a capable parent, and possibly who is willing to parent, appear to relate to the age of children. It is difficult from these data to determine the exact reasons for less shared parenting during the earlier years of a child's life, but it is clear that fathers are more involved with older children. Some relevant factors may include mothers' breastfeeding, mothers' investment in being present during early months and years, fathers' feeling less capable of rearing younger children, and cultural ideas about nurturing. As men are slowly viewed more by society as potential caretakers, there appears to be a greater ease with viewing them as caretakers of older children and teenagers than infants. This data suggests there may be a subtle message communicated to men about their abilities as caretakers. The less children need (as they age) the more fathers may be seen as capable, or view themselves as capable of childcare.

In terms of families who are sharing parenting, the in-depth descriptions of interviewees suggested that, indeed, these families were dividing childcare tasks by criteria other than gender. The flexibility theme suggested that gender was viewed as less important in determining whether a parent should or could undertake a certain parenting task. The major differences in these families from traditional families appeared to be more father-involvement, and less gender role influence on ideas about how to divide tasks. Men and women in these families, on the whole, appeared to consider themselves capable of both private and public sphere work, and to desire both. Despite substantial differences in the extent to which some gendered divisions still existed in these families, gender was never described as the major way tasks or responsibility was divided, and fathers were more involved overall, whether with more or less conventionally masculine activities.

A striking aspect of these families, particularly the ones that retained some more traditional gender divides, was the importance of father-motivation. For several families, the biggest factor in the choice to share parenting came not from the mother's demand for sharing, but from the father's desire to be involved. While little research exists on father desire for involvement in parenting, we do know having had an involved father, and feeling capable of fathering, predict higher involvement. It is plausible that these factors might also increase desire. A father who experienced a positive relationship with an involved father, who by identification believes he could be an effective parent, would likely desire that role more, believing it would be satisfying for him and his child, and would lead to feelings of success, rather than failure. Given that, there is a down side to the perception that fathers are more capable with, or will do less damage to, older (less

needy) children. Views of both men and women about men's capability as parents, including as parents of both younger and older children, is an important area for future research, because unpacking father-desire will be a critical aspect of understanding barriers and motivators to shared parenting.

The next least traditional families, after those for whom father-involvement was the biggest factor, were those where personality was the biggest factor. These were families in which mothers, due to personal preference and personality, tended to be interested in public sphere pursuits, and/or where fathers were more interested or suited to nurturing/parenting. In several of these families, the fathers were described as less traditional in their gender roles, which seemed to raise their interest in parenting. Again, one could argue that these men felt more capable of success at parenting, given their personality styles, and/or gender role identities. Given these tendencies, they may also have received more positive reactions from wives, families, and elsewhere - to the idea of their being highly motivated parents. Perhaps these men had already experienced and managed cultural reactions to being less traditionally masculine, and so doing so again in taking on more childcare tasks may have felt less threatening. Fathers who do share parenting should be studied further in order to assess the extent to which they are aware of defying male gender role norms, and to determine how they manage any resulting role strain. Additionally, understanding how these men came to view themselves as capable parents would provide additional information about how to increase father-desire.

For a third set of families, logistics and work schedules, or simply the desire for equal time at parenting, were the main factors in determining how and when to share tasks. These families tended to make assumptions about capability at parenting or other

tasks that were not linked to gender. Gender role identities of the parents had already

been quite flexible before parenting even arose as an issue. Subjects, on the whole, and

especially in the more logistics-oriented families, described their parents' relationships as

egalitarian, not just with regard to parenting. This was less likely in father-involvement

families, where men may have taken on a more traditional role in other aspects of the

marital relationship, and yet desired father-involvement. There appeared to be some level

of difference between father-involvement families and families where fathers were less

traditional in their gender identities overall, in which father-involvement seemed to flow

naturally out of that. One might speculate that fathers in the former families (and likely

mothers as well) suffered more gender role strain and confusion in terms of the decision

to share parenting than those parents who had already incorporated more flexible gender

role identities .

Although there was a great deal of overlap in terms of the themes that emerged in

how parenting tasks were divided, this research allows for a clearer and more specific

picture of shared parenting in different types of families. Further research could focus on

the motivations for shared parenting, specifically father-desire, mother-desire, mother-

deficit, and so on, and how these factors might affect later gender role identity and

relationship satisfaction of children. Additionally, the major factors in terms of how

tasks are divided - father-desire, personality, or logistics - could also be examined in

terms of their impact. Future research on parents in these differing types of shared

parenting families could provide additional data on how they incorporate sharing

parenting within their larger gender-role identity, and the extent to which role strain is a

factor. Additionally, examining the ways in which different methods of dividing

parenting tasks (and reasons for doing so) correspond to differing levels of relationship satisfaction could allow for a more in-depth understanding of what aspects of shared parenting relate to higher relationship satisfaction. For example, if "logistics" families where gender roles tended to have been already flexible prior to the birth of children have the highest relationship satisfaction, this would suggest it is an egalitarian stance in general, rather than specifically shared parenting, that predicts higher relationship satisfaction.

Other areas for further research include cultural factors and the practice of shared parenting. Given the small sample size, the inference that Asian families shared parenting more cannot be made, and should be further investigated. Additionally, the role of other caregivers in families should be studied. In our small group of interviewees, the role of other caregivers was described as minimal. It would be interesting to determine whether, on the whole, shared parenting families feel less need for outside childcare, or whether this was anomalous to the sample described here. Finally, there are a variety of family arrangements that fall outside the scope of this research. To what extent do the benefits and outcomes of shared parenting apply to divorced families, or families in which parents are same-sex, or where parenting is shared, but by other family members?

Conclusions Related to Gender Role Identity and Confusion

The concept of father-desire raises key questions related to the feminist and masculinist psychoanalytic paradigms addressed earlier. A man's desire to father relates to his views of fathering/parenting as a part of his gender role identity. Future research could examine the gender role identities of men who choose to share parenting for a

variety of reasons. If, in fact, men who identify as more androgynous in general (personality and personal preference factors) and those who experienced father-involvement themselves (and likely view childcare as a natural part of the male role) are more likely to share parenting, this would provide evidence for the argument that primary female mothering both restricts the gender role identities of men and lessens the likelihood of shared parenting, potentially lessening father-desire. Men whose fathers took part in childcare in this study described themselves as less traditional in terms of gender role identity, and subjects in this study described the ways in which their concepts of both male and female gender roles were more flexible and androgynous because of their having experienced shared parenting.

Shared parenting breaks down the dichotomized notions of gender in our society that serve to make shared parenting unlikely in the first place. Perhaps the key factor in this dynamic is messages to men. Women's gender role identities have expanded significantly with the women's movement. While many women may feel stress based on taking on both private and public sphere activities, the act of working outside the home does not present a major strain on their gender identities or represent a major digression from what is normative for their gender. This is significantly less true for men. The tendency of men not to be equally involved fathers seems to stem not only from their not having had a father who did so, but from the general messages one receives in a family where the mother is the caretaker and nurturer.

As the masculinist theorists suggest, the lack of an intimate connection with their same-sex parent, akin to the one they have with their mother, leaves men experiencing what has been described as "male relational dread" (Pleck, 1995). Men who grew up in

families where intimacy, relating, and nurturing were seen as activities of the opposite sex are left feeling less comfortable or at ease with intimacy in general, and this increase may extend to relationships with children. This study suggests that it is the men who do expect to be successful with their children (men who had involved fathers and/or who already have a more androgynous gender role identity), who are more likely to become involved. Thus, shared parenting increases the likelihood of shared parenting, as men raised with fathers who had more flexible gender role identities, like the men in this study, grow up to be more flexible themselves.

The results of this study suggest the need for additional societal shifts in gender role flexibility to improve positive outcomes for children in shared parenting families. As hypothesized, the children of shared parenting families, did, in fact, have more flexible, less narrow gender role identities. While these subjects felt quite strongly that their experiences have led them to greater relationship satisfaction in adulthood, and all seemed to view flexibility of gender role identity as a key element in a successful relationship, there were also some conflicts apparent in the subjects' feelings about their own gender role identities. In some cases, these conflicts included confusion about how to structure their relationships. Despite all viewing gender role flexibility positively, and all describing their gender roles as non-traditional or flexible, some subjects tested as having a level of gender role confusion, or lack of clarity about their gender role identities.

One important factor in assessing gender role identity confusion is the relative youth of the subjects. For some, clearer gender role identities may emerge with time. Still, the confusion with which some subjects discussed their identities was notable.

Some described them as quite fixed, as in the young woman who described herself as

more masculine but who tested feminine on the BSRI. Others noted ambivalence about

dividing relationship tasks, as in the woman who said she wants her relationship to be

equal and flexible like her parents', but who struggles with whether she should take on

more domestic feminine roles such as having dinner ready when her husband comes

home. Another talked about feeling that she is more masculine except in the area of

being nurturing and caring for others. One male subject got the mixed message from his

parents that gender roles should be flexible but that as a male he should be a bread-

winner. Most of the subjects described some level of mixed messages about gender roles,

despite having clearly concluded that egalitarian relationships would work better overall.

Even subjects who felt their families were quite non-traditional and did not send many

mixed messages talked about some confusion about their own gender role identities.

One could conclude that shared parenting families result in gender role identity

confusion, but there are two major potential flaws in that reasoning. First, it assumes that

these subjects are more confused about their gender role identities than their peers who

did not experience shared parenting. While that assessment is largely beyond the scope

of this study, if that were the case, one would have expected more of the subjects to be

classified as undifferentiated on the Bem Sex Role Inventory, compared to the general

population. This was not the case. Gender role identity confusion is common in our

society, in which women's roles have changed drastically and men's somewhat.

Second, such a conclusion does not take cultural factors into account. It is more

reasonable to conclude that growing up in a shared parenting family results in gender role

confusion within the context of a culture in which shared parenting and gender role

identity flexibility/androgyny are not normative. Growing up in these families

necessarily means growing up in a relatively unusual family. Despite the subjects' failure

to indicate that they felt any negative reactions from others about their family structures,

the parents of these families, regardless of their reasons for sharing parenting, were still

functioning within a larger culture in which parenting has been largely dictated by gender

roles. Thus, they were negotiating varying degrees of gender role transgression

themselves, which likely resulted in some level of confusion and consequent mixed

messages to children.

   Even in families where parents are most comfortable in their shared parenting and

more androgynous gender roles, the children would have to negotiate conflict between

the messages about gender received in their families and larger societal messages. A

notable feature of the interviews was that despite such negotiation, the subjects found it

difficult to articulate any negative aspects of shared parenting, and overall were satisfied

with their gender role identities, relationship satisfaction, and the general experience of

shared parenting. Given this, one must be cautious in interpreting gender role

"confusion" in a negative light. On the one hand, such confusion may not be a direct

result of shared parenting, but rather of societal gender messages which conflict with

egalitarian parenting. In this regard, shared parenting, particularly father-involvement,

would need to become more normative and less threatening to the still-narrow gender

role ideals that contemporary men face, in order to mitigate any gender role identity

confusion. On the other hand, gender role "confusion" could also be interpreted as

gender role "flexibility." The fact that some subjects had difficulty identifying a clear

gender role identity may be a function of their flexible gender role identities and an

ability to adapt to differing needs and situations. While for some, mixed feelings about their roles appeared to cause some moderate distress, overall the subjects were pleased with the experience of shared parenting, and did not appear to feel the need for a more stable gender role identity.

A relational psychoanalytic perspective can be useful in considering the flexibility and sense of transitiveness in the subjects' gender role identity presentations. Rather than viewing statements of identifying as masculine in some ways and feminine in others, of having mixed feelings about meeting the role expectations of one's gender, and/or differences between stated gender identification and BSRI score as confusing or problematic, we might view them as an alternate experience of gender, similar to that articulated by Muriel Dimen (1991). Dimen speaks of a transitional space in which gender can be experienced as more or less salient at different times, and gender role identity can ebb and flow, not due to identity confusion, but in response to a more integrated experience of self. Rather than the splitting off of those experiences which are not gender-congruent, as might be necessary in a more traditional setting, these subjects may be experiencing differing, and possibly incongruous gendered states as part of a single identity.

Perhaps having experienced more flexible gender role modeling in their families of origin, these subjects are experiencing not only more flexible, androgynous gender roles, but in addition, are experiencing gender itself as more fluid and transitional. This concept is not unlike the experiences that have been described by bi-racial individuals who speak of moving in and out of states of racial and cultural identity. For example,

Gloria Anzaldua (1987) describes the *mestiza* identity as a new, less-boundaried

experience of identity itself.

> These numerous possibilities lead *la mestiza*… to a swamping of her
> psychological borders. She has discovered that she can't hold concepts or
> ideas in rigid boundaries. The borders and walls that are supposed to keep
> the undesirable ideas out are entrenched habits and patterns of behavior;
> these habits and patterns are the enemy within. Rigidity means death.
> Only by remaining flexible is she able to stretch the psyche… to divergent
> thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and
> toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes.
> (79)

Anzaldua, who also focuses on the "borderlands" of gendered categories in her

description of the *mestiza* experience, might consider these subjects as having moved out

of "habits and patterns" associated with rigid concepts of gender to more inclusive selves,

which make room for more gendered and less gendered experiences. Our subjects may

be holding different aspects of self in a way that challenges the very concept of

dichotomous gendered categories.

Overall, interviewees felt that their parents had better marriages, and were better

parents, than parents in other families, and regarded their own gender role identities as

more flexible, and their own relationships as more egalitarian and stronger as a result of

having experienced shared parenting. While the study lacked a control group of subjects

who had not experienced shared parenting, who could conceivably have rated their own

parents as having had just as high a level of relationship satisfaction, the qualitative

descriptions set forth by these subjects are compelling in terms of the parental

relationships and general high level of family functioning described. Further, the subjects

reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction that the general sample on the DAS-7

measure of relationship satisfaction. Still, each of these findings should be studied

quantitatively with a larger sample, similar to the survey sample in this study, but with

researchers looking more closely at the relationships between shared parenting, gender

identity, and relationship satisfaction. The various types of shared parenting families

described above could be examined to see whether the reasons for sharing parenting tasks

correlate with flexibility in gender role identity and with relationship satisfaction.

Anecdotal evidence from this qualitative study suggests that families whose shared

parenting arose from logistics and where parenting tasks were undertaken without

concern for gender identity produce the most androgynous offspring. Families in which

task-sharing reflected father-involvement, but where roles remained more gendered,

tended to have offspring who identified more strongly with one gender. In some cases

this was not the same gender, as in the woman who had rejected her mother's more

traditional role and identified with her father, stating that she wishes to pursue her career

while her husband is home more with children.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that Pollack's (1995) conclusion that

"connection and autonomy are seen as the special province of one gender alone" (p. 56)

does not apply to families in which primary female mothering is not normative. Involved

fathers seemed to have sons with fewer of the relational deficits and less role strain that

Pleck (1995) and others have described. Equal parenting does appear to lessen the "alpha

bias" in which differences between males and females are exaggerated (Hare-Mustin,

1988). Thus, shared parenting may be not only a symptom of more flexible gender role

identities in society, but also a method by which to increase gender role flexibility. The

fact that adults who grew up in shared parenting families do have more flexible gender

role identities lends support to the feminist and masculinist arguments that the extent to

which gender roles are dichotomized in our society is not solely a consequence of biology or the natural order, but results from family structures such as primary female mothering and the institutional and cultural structures that perpetuate it. Women's entry into the workplace has not been enough to alter gender role dichotomies, but instead has resulted in role confusion, as both men and women navigate a world of mixed messages. Increased father-involvement such that shared parenting is more normative would give us a more realistic picture of how different men and women truly are, and the offspring of such families would not have to reconcile conflicts between family and societal messages in understanding their own gender role identities.

Conclusions Related to Marital Satisfaction

Ehrenberg et al. (2001) found that "relational and psychological shared parenting dimensions" predicted marital satisfaction, parental competence, and closeness to children. The subjects interviewed in this study clearly felt that less dichotomized gender roles increased their parents' relationships satisfaction, and their own. All the subjects but one felt their parents had high relationship satisfaction, and all the subjects reported high relationship satisfaction themselves. While one subject wished that marital tasks were more shared, the others reported a high level of satisfaction about the level of sharing, and a high level of sharing, in their relationships. More research is needed to confirm that in a larger sample, subjects from shared parenting families have higher relationship satisfaction. For our subjects, scores on the DAS-7 were considerably higher than the sample on which the measure was normed. Further, the results suggest that egalitarian roles are passed on from one generation to the next. Additional research could focus on exploring such inter-generational patterns.

The experiences of these subjects confirmed Arendell's (1997) finding that "healthy balance between autonomous functioning and affiliative relatedness predicted marital satisfaction… and family adaptation." The subjects on the whole viewed their parents' sharing of tasks as extending into other aspects of family life such that shared parenting grew out of, and also helped maintain, a good marital relationship and positive parent-child relationships. Many subjects felt their parents' sharing grew out of an already egalitarian relationship and from the fact that both parents already identified as having flexible gender roles prior to having children. The fact that subjects equated gender role flexibility with high relationship satisfaction in both their parents and themselves is in keeping with the arguments of feminist and masculinist theorists that dichotomized gender roles create tension and exaggerate differences in heterosexual relationships. One could argue that the subjects in this study, not having experienced primary female mothering, avoided some of the pitfalls discussed by these theorists. For example, the men may have been less likely to experience relational dread, or carry unconscious anger at having to deny their relational selves and sever intimate ties with their mothers. This may explain why they themselves pursued more egalitarian relationships and appear to view themselves as potentially involved fathers. The females in our study may have had less difficulty individuating from their mothers as their relationships with their involved fathers allowed them to strike a balance between viewing themselves as related and autonomous. Future research could look more closely at these specific questions; for example, by measuring male relational dread in men whose parents did and did not share parenting.

Almost all the subjects believed that their parents' relationship had affected their choice of partner, in that they had sought out someone with a more flexible gender identity, who was more egalitarian, who was a male with a nurturing side, and so on. These subjects all viewed shared parenting and sharing of family tasks in general as a key aspect of a good marriage. A larger study looking at the extent of egalitarian parenting and its impact on later marital satisfaction might provide further evidence that shared parenting benefits not only children, but parents themselves.

<div align="center">Implications for Mental Health Professionals and Policy-Makers</div>

Implications for Parenting

According to the literature cited previously, nontraditional and more involved fathers have better relationships with children. Father involvement has been found to improve female parenting because it reduces strain on mothers and allows them to avoid burnout. The subjects in this study echoed these findings. Many reported strong relationships with both parents, particularly fathers. In a few cases close relationships with fathers were reported in instances were mothers had parenting deficits. Overall, the evidence supports the conclusion that increased father involvement and/or shared parenting improves family functioning, with higher marital satisfaction, better parenting by both males and females, closer relationships between parents and children, and higher self-esteem and happiness in men. Shared parenting seems to be good for parents and good for children. Subjects in our study found it difficult to come up with negative aspects of shared parenting, but described a variety of positive aspects, including strong relationships with both parents, low parental burnout, positive marital relationships, and better relationship satisfaction in adulthood. While subjects did present with a level of

gender role identity confusion, such confusion is common, possibly not negative in its implications, and not limited to children of egalitarian parents.

Given the findings of this study and others, mental health professionals should provide education about the benefits of shared parenting and support to families who attempt it. Specific strategies for dividing parenting tasks based on criteria other than gender should be offered; for example, logistics related to work, personal preferences and assets. Role flexibility should be stressed. Obstacles to sharing of tasks should be evaluated for and discussed, particularly related to gender role strain. Gender role identities of parents should be explored in relation to parenting, particularly with regard to fathers' experiences with their own fathers and feelings about their level of capability as parents. Fathers may need encouragement and psychoeducation about their abilities as nurturers and about the importance of their presence as caretakers to children. Fathers and mothers should both be educated about the ways in which relational dread is passed on in men, how it may be influencing the father's ideas of himself as a parent, and how to avoid passing it along to sons. The value of shared parenting in families where there are parental deficits should be emphasized. In several of the families studied here, father-involvement helped mitigate the negative effects of mother-limitations.

Parenting implications for policy-makers include improving public education about the benefits of shared parenting and changing the conditions of extramarital work such that shared parenting becomes a more viable option for families. As more traditional gender role ideas have prevailed, especially for men, despite the movement of women into the workforce, there is a need for educational campaigns to increase the public's awareness that fathers are equally capable parents, and that shared parenting

conduces to children's mental health and academic success, parents' mental health, improved parenting in mother and fathers, and improved marital relationships. To develop a culture in which shared parenting is viable, cultural awareness about gender role flexibility is necessary. The subjects in this study suggested quite clearly that their parents did not begin the process of creating an egalitarian family when their children were born. The more shared and flexible the families already were, the more smoothly they seem to have moved on to shared parenting.

Finally, in order to practice shared parenting, even the most egalitarian and flexible families require societal structures that allow for work-life balance and flexibility. Workplaces need to mirror and model the flexibility that exists in shared parenting homes. Parents need to be able to alter their schedules so that they can be in the home at different times. One or both parents will likely need the option to alternate between part-time and full-time work at different times during their children's development. Where parents believe they will be penalized for requiring workplace flexibility, shared parenting will be less likely. Despite the recent recession, workplaces wishing to attract qualified female workers have found that increasing the flexibility afforded to women increases productivity (Kay & Shipman, 2009). A trend in which women have fared better in the workplace during the recent recession than men had been widely reported. Policymakers must take into account the needs of contemporary families, in which women may be more able to find and keep jobs, and continue to build on the growing evidence that increasing workplace flexibility for both men and women increases productivity and worker satisfaction.

Implications for Working with Gender

Understanding the dynamics of shared parenting sheds light on societal gender issues that often go unspoken and unprocessed. Even in our subjects whose families chose to organize in ways that altered common gender dynamics, many stated that the interview was the first time they really thought about or discussed the way that this type of family structure affected their gender role identities and their general development: Mental health professionals are uniquely poised to bring gender into discussions of self and of family dynamics. This means challenging patients to examine the ways in which primary female mothering or shared parenting, or some mixture of the two, affected them. For males with children, it means exploring the ways in which cultural messages and their own experiences with their fathers might influence their choices about parenting. For children of shared parenting families, it means exploring with them any conflicts between cultural messages and those of their families. Assisting patients in processing the confusing gender messages that pervade our society is an important aspect of any treatment, and may lead patients to a sense of greater options for organizing their relationships, including the option to parent on an equal basis with a spouse.

Implications for Couples and Marital Counseling

As evidence for the marital benefits of shared parenting and egalitarian approaches to relationships in general increases, mental health professionals must make a commitment to educating couples about the benefits of these approaches and assisting them in assessing the gender-role balances or imbalances in their relationships in terms of gender roles. Just as feminist and masculinist theorists have pointed out the societal alpha bias which exaggerates differences and disguises similarities between the sexes,

such dichotomous thinking frequently plagues individual marriages. Since the benefits of shared parenting seems to improve not only outcomes for children, but also the mental health and marital satisfaction of partners, challenging couples to break down such dichotomies has many potential benefits, including mental health benefits. Psychoeducation relating to these potential benefits could help motivate couples to increase the flexibility in their gender roles within their marriages. For some couples, simply hearing that there are families where roles are more fluid and tasks are shared could provide options other than those presented in couples' families of origin or in the larger culture.

As research has also suggested that matches between traditional and less traditional partners correlate with lower marital satisfaction, providers working with couples not yet married or with those questioning their compatibility may want to explore these issues with patients. Discussions of the gender-role expectations each partner brings to a relationship should be an integral part of any couples treatment. Cultural factors must also be discussed openly and respected when working with couples around gender issues. For some families, religious or cultural factors may make shared parenting or flexible gender roles problematic or even impossible. While this should not deter practitioners from discussing possible benefits with clients, it is also important to do so within the context of the couples' beliefs and goals. Increasing flexibility even slightly might assist even those more traditional families, if approached with respect for cultural beliefs and couples' experiences of the benefits of their traditional modes. An exploration of differences between the pressures inherent in the structure of American society as opposed to the families' culture of origin may assist in helping them consider

the potential value of increased gender role flexibility, especially now, when women now outnumber men in the workforce.

For couples who wish to increase flexibility and to share parenting tasks equally, a close, targeted examination of family tasks and how they are approached can be extremely helpful. For many couples, simply listing tasks and who does them, or discussing which tasks partners would actually prefer, or quantifying who is spending how much time at childcare, can be eye-opening. Many couples can benefit from assistance in quantifying family tasks and from a pragmatic discussion about how exactly to increase flexibility, to involve a father more in childcare, and so on. Many of these discussions will necessitate encouraging couples to think creatively about work-life balance and about how to maneuver around societal structures that are not yet friendly to shared parenting. Processing couples' frustrations about barriers to such parenting is also an important aspect of treatment.

Increasing Shared Parenting

Deutsch (2001) found that couples who shared parenting did not believe that women are more responsible for children or more capable of caring for them. Since gender role flexibility proved to be the most pervasive theme in families where parenting was shared, continuing to expand notions of gender roles for women, and especially for men, is critical to increasing the sharing of parenting tasks. According to prior research, women's expectations that men will share in parenting tasks increases shared parenting. In this study, however, the importance of male desire to parent was a major finding. Increasing men's desire to participate in childcare means increasing the sense that they are capable of intimate connections and relatedness. Men who experience high

involvement from their own fathers are more likely to view themselves as capable, and are, therefore, most likely to desire involvement themselves. One area for further study is how to improve father-desire among men who did not experience shared parenting. Public education about men's ability to be nurturing and to participate in all aspects of childcare, not just those considered more masculine, could result in higher father-desire. Men are unlikely to acknowledge or encourage in themselves a desire to be highly involved in parenting if they believe they would not be successful, or that such involvement would not be beneficial to children. Given that the benefits of father-involvement are clear, and better researched than those of shared parenting, this would be a prime area for public education. Parents need to know not only that their marriages would benefit from an egalitarian approach to parenting, but also that their children would benefit.

For policy-makers and public officials and institutions, the best way to increase father-involvement, aside from increasing education about father-ability, is to approach and conceptualize fathers as full parents. Educational materials and outreach aimed at parents should be geared toward people of both genders, not just mothers. Societal messages that only mothers do or should be interested in parenting reinforce the idea that men are less capable or that a desire to be a full parent is outside male gender norms. Messages in the media should be discussed and questioned, and counter-messages encouraged, just as messages related to racial identity have been. For fathers to feel more at ease being decision-makers, nurturers, and caretakers for children, they must be treated as fully capable and fully desirous of these activities. While messages suggesting that women are less competent, capable, or desirous of public sphere activities are rare

nowadays, parental leave laws, workplace policies, and workplace culture often result in penalties for men who choose to take time off when a child is born or to structure their work schedule around family needs. Several European countries have instituted family leave policies that encourage shared parenting, in which the same amount of time is afforded mothers and fathers, but must be used by both parents, not just one.

Institutional structures have two major impacts on the frequency of shared parenting. First, barriers to male-involvement send messages to men that reinforce traditional notions of their role as parents. Second, for men who do desire higher involvement, and families who wish to practice shared parenting, such barriers serve as impediments. For many families, both parents work in a profession where part-time work, job-sharing, flexible scheduling, and other options are not available or would come with hidden costs in terms of advancement later in their careers. For these families, sharing may not be financially viable, as both parents cannot afford to take risks with their job stability or leave their jobs. In other families, one parent may make the choice to work in a more flexible environment, often for lower pay, in exchange for a more flexible set-up. This parent is most often female, as the pressure on men to be breadwinners and enter into lucrative professions is still strong. However, in this time period when women are overtaking men in numbers in the workplace, and finding it easier to keep jobs, structural change may become more necessary. In order to sustain a reasonable work-family balance, women will be demanding more flexibility. Further, as more men find themselves taking on greater responsibilities at home, societal ideas about men's capability as parents can be expected to shift. Still, the fastest route to increased

shared parenting is for laws and public policies to reflect the value of shared parenting and to view fathers as equal parents.

How the Data Differed from Expectations and Hypotheses

While qualitatively the subjects clearly identify as less gender-traditional than is normative, only one interview subject was identified as androgynous on the BSRI. The subjects had more difficulty identifying a clear gender role identity than was expected. Many described mixed messages in their families about gender role, but even those who felt their families had modeled a high level of egalitarianism appear to have been left with some confusion about their gender identities. While the subjects were very positive overall in their feelings about having experienced shared parenting, they tended to stress the positive aspects of their parents' relationships and to emphasize what they learned about relationships. None of the subjects identified having a non-traditional gender-identity as a positive. The hypothesis that subjects would identify clearly as androgynous may have underestimated the impact of societal messages from outside the family. The study results show that despite having more flexible gender role identities than the general population, subjects were still negotiating role confusion, most likely due to strong societal messages that conflict with what they experienced in their families, as well as their parents' confusion and mixed messages given the cultural context of their decisions to share parenting.

In general, the subjects saw their parents' non-traditional roles as parents as more related to general positive aspects of their relationships than to attitudes about gender. In this way, relationship satisfaction and gender identity were related even more strongly than was expected, and for the subjects, this relationship flowed in the opposite manner

than was expected. The subjects saw a good relationship as producing gender-neutral behavior rather than the other way around. It is, of course, difficult to tease this out. It could be that for their parents, who were already gender non-traditional, a good relationship would necessarily have to be more egalitarian. Still, none of the families was described as purposefully passing along nontraditional gender roles, as I had expected. A more accurate statement was that the parents were purposefully passing along what they saw as a positive approach to their relationships and to family life in general, which included a high degree of egalitarianism, including in parenting.

The Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability of the Results

This section discusses the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of both the quantitative survey data and instruments and the qualitative data.

Credibility

The credibility of a study refers to the extent to which its procedures are appropriate and generate a valid sample. According to Morse and Richards (2007), validity in qualitative research is obtained by careful and focused planning in order to assure all the "fit of data, question and method" (p. 80). In the current study, the McCracken long-interview method was chosen for its ability to capture complex in-depth data in settings in which observation is not appropriate, and the researcher explored a cultural construct within her own culture of origin. Narrative data was chosen to best explore the experiences of adult subjects and allow for the transmission of meaning and for theory and construct-building to occur during data analysis. Validity in qualitative research requires that the result "carefully represent the phenomenon being studied" (p.

190). This is ensured by focusing each stage of research around the research question and through the fit of these stages within the larger project, as well as through the transparency of the reporting of each stage of research.

A variety of measures were utilized to determine whether the sample actually represented individuals who experienced shared parenting. A survey was utilized, in addition to the respondents' qualitative description of their parenting experiences. Subjects were scored on the level of shared parenting they had experienced, and then were compared to a statistically large sample in order to identify those individuals with the highest degree of shared parenting. In terms of measuring the subjects' gender role identities and level of relationship satisfaction, reliable instruments normed on large samples were utilized in addition to the subjects' qualitative descriptions. Based on quantitative data from the survey and other instruments, the subjects were less gender-role normative, had higher relationship satisfaction, and had experienced a higher degree of shared parenting than the general population. The subjects also all described themselves as having some degree of flexible gender role identities, as having high relationship satisfaction, and as having experienced an unusual degree of shared parenting.

Transferability/External Validity

Do the data translate to the larger world outside the conditions of the study? Subjects interviewed for this study were experts on the experience of having parents who divided childcare tasks by criteria other than gender. In-depth exploration was possible. Given the small size of the sample, however generalizability to the larger population of those who experienced shared parenting is not possible. Specific characteristics of the

interviewees color and inform the data in ways that cannot be rectified by random sampling as they would be in a larger sample. Because this study was exploratory in nature, its main purpose was to generate rich, in-depth material related to the subjects experiences, to draw out which particular areas related to the topic would be more important to study in a more exhaustive manner. Considering the small subject pool, a study of this kind cannot represent the totality of experiences of subjects, particularly related to the questions covered in the interview, due to the small subject pool.

In terms of the survey data, however, the pool was large enough to provide adequate statistical power to draw conclusions about a population. Therefore the information about the commonality of equally shared parenting, for example, within certain age groups, the likelihood of parents of people in various age groups having worked, and so on, should be representative of the population studied. There are some limits to transferability related to the recruitment procedures. Subjects overall tended to be Caucasian, well-educated, and middle class. Transferability to subjects outside this group, including those with divorced parents who shared parenting, would be limited. The subjects were also on the young side overall and needed to be computer-literate in order to participate. The advantages of this subject pool was that younger subjects would likely have more information to provide about shared parenting as they were more likely to have experienced it. Furthermore, a well-educated, verbal group of subjects could articulate a wide range of aspects of the experience of shared parenting. Still, a wider range of subjects needs to be studied.

Dependability

According to Morse and Richards (2007), reliability in qualitative research means "the same results would be obtained if the study were replicated" (p. 190). This requires the data be collected in the least biased way, such that as little influence over subjects as possible occurs, and the researcher is aware of her potential biases in terms of collecting and analyzing data. Further, data must be analyzed in such a way as to express clearly and concisely what subjects have brought up. There are limits to reliability within the long-interview method, in that subjects report on experiences based on their own memories rather than observed factual accounts. The specificity of the survey should make the reporting of parenting experience as concrete as possible, but the interview data prioritizes depth and meaning over specificity. The truth of experience as the subjects recollect and process it can be as valuable and telling as exact factual accounts of, for example, amount of time each parent spent at certain parenting tasks, barring major inaccuracies or intentional mis-informing.

Reliability of quantitative data was sought by utilizing measures that have been shown to be reliable, as well as by utilizing several different measures of the same concept. For example, for interview subjects, the survey and the subjects' qualitative descriptions were taken together to assess their level of shared parenting. In terms of choosing subjects to be interviewed, the subjects' overall shared parenting score on the survey was compared to a single item asking him or her to rate parents' overall parenting in terms of the degree to which it was equally shared. Still, reliability data on the survey were not collected, so the reliability of the survey remains in question. However, given

the large sample size for the survey data, these data could potentially represent an accurate sample of the general population, if the survey is, in fact, reliable and valid.

Finally, at the end of the interview, subjects were given the opportunity to provide any additional information that might be relevant. Almost all the subjects indicated that they felt that all the important information had already been covered, suggesting that the interview protocol was comprehensive in capturing key aspects of the experience of shared parenting and its impact on gender role identity and future relationship satisfaction. Finally, data that was not found in more than one interview was not included in the final analysis, and the majority of key themes discussed were mentioned in more than half. When this was not the case, it was indicated in the results.

As to the interview data, subjects were reporting on their experiences as children, in terms of how their parents divided parenting tasks. These results necessarily represent the now-adult's perspective on childhood and may not be accurate or represent the same perspective parents would give. Still, the purpose of this study was to assess what connections the actual children of shared parenting families see between that family structure and later gender role identity and relationship satisfaction. It was the general conclusions about gender, about themselves, and about their relationships that was being sought rather than accurate specifics about the division of childcare. Still, it is important to view these results within the context of the self-report of adults, several to many years after the fact.

Confirmability

Chapter Three provides a detailed description of the procedures utilized in this study so that they could be replicated. Until the study can be replicated, however, one cannot predict whether additional subjects would yield the same results.

One key issue affecting confirmability relates to experimenter bias. I am a Caucasian, female, raised in a home in which equal parenting was not practiced. My parents divided parenting tasks based on gender, with childrearing in general considered primarily the mother's task. Despite this, I consider myself primarily androgynous in gender role, and move relatively flexibly between traditionally male and female modes of being. As a result of discomfort with my parents' strategies and an innate sense of the gender inequities in my home, I came to value gender role flexibility, and to aspire to practice equal parenting myself. While I do not yet have children, it is my intention to practice equal parenting. As a gender studies major, I increased my knowledge and awareness of the history of gendered divisions of labor and their potential deleterious effects.

The main source of potential bias in my approach to this study related to my predisposition to view equal parenting positively, and to assume those who practiced it did so based on the kind of theoretical-political feminist gender ideals I espouse. My bias is that children would do better with equal parenting, as they would feel freer to be both nurturing and productive. It was crucial for me to be open to and seek out data that disconfirmed my biases. For example, I found that for the vast majority of subjects, parents practiced shared parenting not to pass along feminist ideals to their children, or to encourage androgynous behavior, as in the case of the Bem family, but simply because

pragmatically that was the best way for them to structure family and work life. I

attempted to pose questions in such a way as to allow respondents to draw their own

conclusions about why their parents chose to share parenting. Most families did not

espouse feminist ideals or share other liberal values about family life.

I was also careful to remain open to the fact that outcomes may not be as positive

as I expected. Adults could look back on the experience of shared parenting as partially

or largely negative. They could have chosen to practice more traditional parenting. At

times I found this openness more challenging because several of my subjects seemed to

assume I shared the belief that shared parenting was a positive experience. Virtually all

the subjects found it hard to come up with negative aspects of shared parenting.

Because of my expectation that shared parenting may lead to more androgynous

gender role identity, I attempted to take great care not to lead interviewees to this

conclusion. Interviews were designed to limit the opportunity for leading questions, but

rather to ask participants to come to their own conclusions. I myself am an example of

the fact that androgynous gender presentation need not grow out of a feminist or shared

parenting environment. No interviewer can enter into a study without bias or personal

experience that colors the subject matter, but hopefully, with enough awareness and

attempts to lessen the impact of bias, this qualitative study was an ideal tool to capture

the complexity of this experience, without narrowing too quickly what was sure to be a

rich and varied set of data.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Both feminist and masculinist theorists have suggested a strong relationship

between primary female mothering and the perpetuation of traditional gender role

dichotomies. These theorists have also stressed the potential impact of dichotomized

gender roles on relationship satisfaction in heterosexual relationships. By virtue of

having experienced a high level of shared parenting by male and female parents, the

interview subjects in this study provide a sample of adults who did not experience

primary female mothering as children. As theorists have suggested, these subjects

identified themselves as having more flexible gender role identities and higher

relationship satisfaction than their peers. Quantitative measures confirmed that these

subjects did, in fact, experience a higher degree of shared parenting, and had more

flexible gender role identities and relationship satisfaction than the general public.

Survey data also provided demographic information on families in which parenting tasks

were shared, including the frequency of such arrangements, and the fact that shared

parenting is increasing over time, but not in proportion to the increases in mothers

entering the workforce. This suggests that in the vast majority of families, despite

women's entering the workforce, and beginning now to outnumber men there, most

children are still experiencing primary female mothering.

For the subjects in this qualitative study, the experience of shared parenting had a

strong impact on gender role identity that resulted in higher levels of egalitarianism in the

subjects' later relationships, and in higher relationship satisfaction. Positive relationships between relationship satisfaction and general family adjustment found in prior studies were confirmed in the subjects' descriptions of their families. Several keys themes concerning how these shared parenting families divided childcare tasks were identified and can be examined in further research. A narrow male gender role that precludes nurturing and care-giving as major life pursuits for men still appears to inhibit men's level of involvement in childcare, perhaps in part due to their own doubts about their parenting abilities. Survey data suggested that these cultural norms and male doubts may recede slightly as children age. However, gender role limitations and structural barriers in the workplace continue to represent major impediments to shared parenting.

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APPENDIX A

Survey and Interview Questions

<u>Interview Questions:</u>

Who was in the home when you were growing up?

How did your parents divide up childcare tasks?

Did anyone else play a major role in childcare?

Why do you believe they split them up in this way?

How did this parenting style impact you? Your siblings?

What kinds of parenting tasks did your father do?

What kinds of parenting tasks did your mother do?

Did the division of childcare tasks change over time?

What messages did your family give you about gender, specifically the roles of men and women?

How would you describe you gender role identity, meaning how you incorporate the meaning of being male or female with your individual identity? Do you consider yourself a traditional male/female or less traditional?

Do you think growing up with equal/shared parenting impacted the development of your gender role identity? How?

Would you say your parents had specific ideas about gender roles they wanted to communicate to you?

How did your peers respond to your family?

What messages did you get in your family about romantic relationships?

How satisfied are you in your current relationship?

Did your parents use of equal/shared parenting impact the way you approached romantic relationships later on?

Do you believe having had shared parenting impacts your current relationship?

Do you have children? Do you practice shared parenting? Why/Why not?

In general, what would you say were the benefits and drawbacks to having parents who shared parenting tasks?

Survey: See next page.

APPENDIX B

Consent Forms

Subjects were required to give consent before participating in both the survey and interviews (see consent forms below), and had the opportunity to withdraw from the study or withdraw their data from the study at any time. Surveys responses remained anonymous unless subjects choose to provide contact information, in which case this information was only be used by the researcher for purposes of contacting them. Data with identifying information was kept secure and no identifying information was reported within the results of the study.

Survey Consent:

Consent for Survey Respondents
A Study of How Parents Divide Childcare Tasks

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Stephanie L. Sasso, Psy.M., a doctoral student at the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to learn about the frequency of shared parenting and what the experience was like for adults who were parented this way.

Adults over age 18 are eligible to complete this survey. The survey will take you about five minutes to complete. You will have the choice to include contact information or remain anonymous. Anonymous surveys will still be of help to our research. Anonymous means no identifying information about you will be recorded. Contact information is being collected on a voluntary basis in order to identify adults whose parents shared parenting tasks. Should you choose to provide it, your contact information is of value to us regardless of how your parents split up parenting tasks. Surveys in which contact information is provided will be confidential, meaning research records will include whatever contact information you choose to provide, but will be stored on a secure server which can only be accessed by the research team. When the study is concluded, or upon your request, I will destroy this information. The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this

study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, no identifying information will be included, unless you agree otherwise. No more than 500 respondents will participate in taking this survey.

A small number of survey participants who choose to provide contact information will be contacted for a voluntary interview. If you are contacted, you will be free to decline. If you choose not to be interviewed, your contact information will be destroyed.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this survey. If you are contacted and agree to take part in the interview, you will receive $50 for your participation. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions.

If you have any questions about the study procedures, you may contact Stephanie L. Sasso, Psy.M. at (732) 445-6111, ext. 808. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Consent for Interview Subjects
A Study of Gender Role Identity and Relationship Satisfaction in Adults Whose Parents Shared Parenting Tasks Equally

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Stephanie L. Sasso, Psy.M., a doctoral student at the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to learn about the experiences of adults who were raised by parents who divided parenting tasks equally. The study will focus on the experience of shared parenting in general, and how it impacted the gender role identity and relationship satisfaction of adult subjects.

Approximately 10 subjects over the age of 18, who are in relationships of one year's duration or more, and who completed a survey indicating they experienced a high degree of shared parenting, will participate in the study. Each individual's participation will consist of one interview lasting approximately two to four hours. You will be permitted to take breaks whenever needed, as well as to request to continue the interview on a different occasion, in which case compensation will be the same. You will receive $50 for completing the interview and $25 for completing less than half of the interview.
- You will first be asked to complete two short questionnaires, one about your current relationship satisfaction, and one about your gender role identity.
- Next, you will be asked a series of open-ended questions related to your experience of having parents who divided parenting tasks equally, or near equally, particularly related to your gender identity and relationship satisfaction.

This research is confidential; meaning the research records will include some information about you, including an audiotape of your interview, and the questionnaires you complete, as well as the survey you filled out. I will keep this information confidential by limiting access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. Additionally, you will be assigned a random code number that will be used on the questionnaires, as well as to identify the audiotape of your interview. Your name will appear only on the survey you filled out and a list of subjects, which will be stored separately from other data. Only the research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, no identifying information will be included, unless you agree otherwise. At the study's conclusion, I can provide a summary of the research results upon your request.

There are minimal foreseeable risks to participation in this study. The interview questions are not meant to be disturbing or emotionally difficult; however, when discussing one's family and personal experiences, there is always some risk of experiencing a negative emotional reaction. If this occurs, you will be free to end the interview, or discuss your concerns with the interviewer. The interview will be conducted by a master's level clinician, trained to provide a comfortable environment and meet any immediate needs which may arise. If necessary, I can also refer you for low-

cost counseling to The Psychological Clinic on the Rutgers Busch Campus. If needed, appointments can be made by calling (732) 445-6111.

Potential benefits to participating in this study include sharing your experiences in a supportive
setting, coming to a greater understanding of your history, and contributing to important research about the impact of shared parenting.

Initials_____

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions.

If you have any questions about the study procedures, you may contact Stephanie L. Sasso, Psy.M., at 732-445-6111 ext. 808, 327 Becker St., Highland Park, NJ 08904, ssasso@eden.rutgers.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Subject _____Date _____

Principal Investigator _____Date _____

Audiotape Addendum to Consent form

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: A Study of Gender Role Identity and Relationship Satisfaction in Adults Whose Parents Shared Parenting Tasks Equally, conducted by Stephanie Sasso, Psy.M. We are asking for your permission to allow us to audiotape your interview, as part of that research study. If you choose not to be audio taped, you will not be able to participate in this phase of the study. You are free to decline to participate at this time.

The recording will serve as a record of the interview and be used for analysis by the research team only. The recordings will be stored by your subject code number and will not include information identifying you. However, any information provided during the interview will be recorded, including your first name.
The recording will be stored in a locked file cabinet, separate from any identifying information, which can only be accessed by the research team. The recordings will be stored for three years as required by research study guidelines, and will then be destroyed.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record your interview during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording for any other reason than that stated in this consent form without your written permission.

Subject (Print) _____

Subject Signature _____Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____
Date_____

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Advertisements

Posting Sent to Listservs

Email Subject Line: Study on Shared Parenting
My name is Stephanie L. Sasso, Psy. M. I am conducting a dissertation study on adults whose parents shared parenting tasks when they were growing up.   I will be using the following survey (https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=UqavgyBEUsHu_2bX66orY1tg_3d_3d) to determine how common shared parenting is, and to find adults who may have experienced it.   By filling out this short survey (less than 5 minutes to complete) you can assist in our research, regardless of whether or not your parents shared parenting tasks equally. Your assistance with this research will help us to gain important information about the experience of shared parenting and its impact. You can also assist us by forwarding the survey link to anyone else who may be willing to participate. You must be 18 years of age to participate.
Click below to access short survey:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=UqavgyBEUsHu_2bX66orY1tg_3d_3d
Thank you for your participation,
Stephanie L. Sasso, Psy.M. (ssasso@eden.rutgers.edu)

Posting Appearing in Online Newsletters
My name is Stephanie L. Sasso, Psy. M. I am conducting a dissertation study on adults whose parents shared parenting tasks when they were growing up.   I will be using the following survey (https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=UqavgyBEUsHu_2bX66orY1tg_3d_3d) to determine how common shared parenting is, and to find adults who may have experienced it.   By filling out this short survey (less than 5 minutes to complete) you can assist in my research, regardless of whether or not your parents shared parenting tasks equally. Your assistance with this research will help us to gain important information about the experience of shared parenting and its impact. You can also assist us by forwarding the survey link to anyone else who may be willing to participate. You must be 18 years of age to participate.
Click below to access short survey:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=UqavgyBEUsHu_2bX66orY1tg_3d_3d
Thank you for your participation,
Stephanie Sasso, Psy.M. (ssasso@eden.rutgers.edu)

Posting Appearing in a Paper Newsletter
My name is Stephanie L. Sasso, Psy. M. I am conducting a dissertation study on adults whose parents shared parenting tasks when they were growing up.   I will be using an online survey to determine how common shared parenting is, and to find adults who may

have experienced it.   By filling out this short survey (less than 5 minutes to complete) you can assist in my research, regardless of whether or not your parents shared parenting tasks equally. You can fill out the survey by going to the following web address: (https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=UqavgyBEUsHu_2bX66orY1tg_3d_3d). Your assistance with this research will help us to gain important information about the experience of shared parenting and its impact. You can also assist us by sharing the survey link with anyone else who may be willing to participate. You must be 18 years of age to participate.

Thank you for your participation,

Stephanie L. Sasso, Psy.M. (ssasso@eden.rutgers.edu)

Posting Appearing on Websites or Web Boards

My name is Stephanie L. Sasso, Psy. M. I am conducting a dissertation study on adults whose parents shared parenting tasks when they were growing up.   I will be using the following survey to determine how common shared parenting is, and to find adults who may have experienced it.   By filling out this short survey (less than 5 minutes to complete) you can assist in my research, regardless of whether or not your parents shared parenting tasks equally. Click the link below to access the survey. Your assistance with this research will help us to gain important information about the experience of shared parenting and its impact. You can also assist us by forwarding the survey link to anyone else who may be willing to participate. You must be 18 years of age to participate.

Click below to access short survey:

Click Here to take survey

Thank you for your participation,

Stephanie L. Sasso, Psy.M. (ssasso@eden.rutgers.edu)