



1983

A Psychological Study of Working Mothers Who Share Child Care with Their Spouses

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A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF WORKING MOTHERS
WHO SHARE CHILD CARE WITH THEIR SPOUSES

by

Karin A. Ruetzel

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

September

1983

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank both members of her thesis committee, Jeanne M. Foley, Ph.D. and Alan S. DeWolfe, Ph.D., for their considerable support and encouragement throughout the various stages of this project. Special thanks go to Dr. Foley for serving as committee chair. Special thanks go to Dr. DeWolfe for his continued enthusiasm for psychological research which helped to carry the author through her own occasional periods of disheartenment. The author acknowledges a great debt to Charles D.S. Wolfson, Ph.D. who not only provided a model for this research, but also the contact with families from whom the participants in the study were drawn. The author is also grateful to Dan P. McAdams, Ph.D. for his interest which took a number of forms: suggesting measures to include, providing scorers for these measures, and recommending analyses of the data. Gratitude must also be expressed to Michael Bresolin, M.A. for his guidance of the author in use of the computer. Finally the author is thankful to her husband, Antony Burt, for his patient support of a project the importance of which he never doubted during the more than two years it took to complete.

VITA

The author, Karin Ruetzel, was born on September 15, 1957, in Ridgewood, New Jersey. She is the daughter of Herbert Ruetzel and E. Christine (Wahl) Ruetzel.

Her elementary education was obtained in the public school system of Maplewood, New Jersey. Her four years of secondary education were obtained at the American Community School of Beirut, Lebanon, where she graduated in June, 1975. In September, 1975 she entered the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. In January, 1977, she transferred to Duke University, Durham, North Carolina and in May, 1979 received the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Her major was in psychology, and she graduated with Departmental Distinction in that field.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"The lasting strength of families is not in tradition, it is in the capacity for change" (Cocks, 1982, p. 26).

Bearing and rearing children remain part of the life agenda of most American women, yet recent statistics show that women now spend more of their lives working than parenting. Over 60% of women of child-bearing age are members of the labor force (Bureau of the Census, 1980). Since 1960 the number of married women with children under the age of 6 who work outside the home has increased from 18.6 to 43.2% (Bureau of the Census, 1980).

Married women who are mothers of young children work outside the home for a number of reasons. Some have no choice, their income is a financial necessity for the welfare of their families. Others work to supplement the earnings of their husbands who are the primary family breadwinners. A growing number of women are committed to active career involvement throughout their lives.

Women who combine work and family roles while their children are young do so without broad societal approval. Zaslow and Pedersen (1981)

write that the mother of a young child who chooses "the emergent role of combining childrearing with employment must grapple with the fact that this role is not fully articulated or accepted" (p.47). The economic sector is reluctant to make changes which demonstrate an understanding that its workers have families. Experts from various disciplines (e.g., psychology and medicine) still maintain that full-time maternal care should be the rule during a child's early years.

Nor is support necessarily forthcoming from significant others in these women's lives (Etaugh, 1980). By far the majority of mothers who today attempt to balance responsibilities to children and work were reared in homes where such apparent conflicts of interest did not exist. Their recollections of a childhood with a mother who was always available to them may cause them concern about the consequences for their own children of their frequent unavailability. Describing reactions to work outside the home by mothers with young children, Rapoport and Rapoport (1978) note that "conventional-minded relatives and friends may have a particularly powerful capacity to rouse feelings of guilt . . . because they are critical figures against whom one must defend oneself" (p.16).

One finding of the body of research on the effects of maternal employment is that mothers are less likely to feel guilty about working if they are satisfied with the care their children receive in their absence (Etaugh, 1980). What could be more reassuring to the working mother than knowing that her children are being cared for in their home

by a parent--their father. Yet this "obvious" solution is given serious consideration by very few families with young children. The myth that "parenting means mothering" dies slowly (Rutter, 1974). The care of young children was recently described by Wolfson (1981) as "the last frontier of the prevailing sex-role arrangements" (p.103).

According to Wortis (1971), men will not be prepared to assume major roles in childrearing or homemaking without the transformation of existing social and educational institutions. If employers are reluctant to recognize the demands of families on their female workers who are mothers, they are even less likely to do so with regard to fathers (Berger & Wright, 1978). Yet unwilling to wait for broad institutional change, some families have chosen a family constellation in which both parents are financial providers and true partners in the care of their children. While some study of these "androgynous" (DeFrain, 1979) or "symmetrical" (Young & Willmott, 1973) families has been undertaken, there is still much to be learned from a psychological perspective about the women and men who chose such arrangements.

In 1981 Wolfson conducted a psychological study of a group of "shared-caregiving" (Russell, 1981) fathers. These men played a major role in the care of their young children while in most cases simultaneously maintaining their career involvement. The original intent of the present study was to provide a complement to Wolfson's research by focusing on the wives of these men who, like their husbands, held dual

roles. Given this intent, many of the measures which Wolfson administered to his subjects were also included in the current study of their wives. Measures used by Wolfson which did not add to understanding of the subjects were excluded. In addition, some data which Wolfson did not request from his subjects were obtained in the current study.

When data collection began approximately 18 months after Wolfson completed his data collection, it became apparent that the current study also provided a longitudinal perspective on the lives of the original participants. As is typical with follow-up studies, some of the spouses of the original participants were unavailable for participation in the current study. However, other women who agreed to participate provided information which highlighted the changes which had occurred since Wolfson's contact with the families.

Ultimately the purpose of the research is to expand the psychological understanding of a growing segment of the American population--working women who are also married and the mothers of young children. To accomplish this purpose, two groups of women were compared. One group consisted of women who relied primarily upon sharing child care with their spouses to meet the needs of work and family roles. The other group had spouses who were more traditional in their involvement in child care and relied primarily upon nonparental child care to meet these needs.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As a background to the current study it is necessary to have both a recent historical perspective and an understanding of more conventional child care arrangements of American families in which both parents are employed. The psychological and sociological research literatures are drawn upon to provide this information. Existing research has focused largely on the experiences and characteristics of white middle-class families which may limit the applicability of discussion to this population. The emphasis in this review on a select population is the result of a necessary narrowing of focus, not a desire to ignore the existence of other family types and the need for an understanding of their child care arrangements.

Shared parental child care by definition requires the caregiving of both parents. The female biological ability to nurture an infant has caused women's broader nurturing capacity to be taken for granted in our society. A section describing the mother-child bond discusses this issue and touches on the related topic of maternal guilt.

On the other hand, males in our society have been assumed to be uninterested in, if not incapable of, providing nurturance for young children (Darley, 1976). This review addresses the issue of male involvement with their offspring with a discussion of recent findings.

The findings of the existing research on shared parental child care are presented next. Studies which have been performed suggest that parents' choice of child care arrangements are a function of psychological factors as well as of broader considerations such as dominant cultural values and the structure of the economic sector. Sex-role orientation, attitudes about sex-appropriate behavior, and commitment to personal ideals are examples of such factors. The early life experiences of those now making a choice about child care arrangements also seem to contain important psychological influences. Finally the literature suggests that there are demographic and life-style differences between women and their spouses who have chosen to combine family and work roles in this manner and those who have not. Findings in these areas provide the basis for the hypotheses proposed in the current study. The hypotheses are presented in the summary of the chapter.

Historical Perspective

What are generally considered to be traditional child care arrangements in our society--around-the-clock care of young children by mothers while fathers provide economic support for the family--are the product of an affluent society. As such, they have a relatively short history.

Prior to industrialization, women's economic contribution was too valuable to allow severance of maternal and productive worker roles. Women fulfilled both roles at the same time and in the same setting, typically an agricultural one. Bernard (1974) reports, "there was a time when a mother's work could be fitted into the rest of a woman's life without a seam" (p. x). Young and Wilmott (1973) contend that it was the economic value of a woman as a worker, together with her ability to produce other workers, which gave her what power she had in the marital relationship.

The Industrial Revolution brought with it the separation of the workplace from the home. Participation in the paid labor force became the domain of men, and in some cases unmarried women and children. Women were expected to perform the unpaid tasks of child care and housework. A distinction developed between the "productive" labor of men in the workplace and the "non-productive" labor of women in the home, with much higher status being assigned to the former.

World War II created a short-lived respite for some American women from this rigid differentiation of roles. These women entered the labor force to fill positions left vacant by men who had joined the military. As soon as the war ended, however, patriotic encouragement helped them to leave the labor force and refocus on their families.

The move out of the labor force was complimented by reports from authorities on childhood (psychologists, pediatricians, etc.) of "the

crucial importance of mothering" (Rapoport, Rapoport, Strelitz, & Kew, 1977). Child care manuals were written with the underlying assumption that mothers oversaw every moment of a child's development (Curtis, 1975).

Throughout the remainder of the 1940s and the 1950s it was expected that women would be exclusively invested in the roles of mother and homemaker. Veroff and Feld (1970) collected data from a national survey of women and men during the 1950s and concluded, "motherhood still remains a role in which an educated woman can find the personal gratification she needs to justify her existence" (p. 335). Women who were not fully satisfied by this role proscription found socially accepted outlets in volunteer religious or community work. Other women utilized their talents to help advance the careers of their husbands, creating what Papanek (1973) described as "the two-person career".

By the 1960s it had started to become acceptable for a middle-class married woman to seek employment, provided it was clear that her family and children were her first priority (Helson, 1972). This is not to say that it had become acceptable to pursue a career. "'Career woman' had a negative, entirely nonfeminine connotation, which meant that a woman was maladjusted or resigned to spinsterhood" (Helson, 1972, p.36). In the context of the family, a woman's work outside the home was thought of as a diversion, something to do to get out of the house for a few hours. In the context of the economic sector, women were

"pulled" into the job market because they were needed to fill available positions (Dunlop, 1981).

Alternately, because men were viewed as having sole responsibility for the economic stability of their families, there was much pressure for them to advance in the work world. Bernard (1980) observes that the term "workaholic" was coined during the 1960s to describe a man who had invested himself in his worklife to the exclusion of any involvement in the daily life of his family. Occupational success also became a socially accepted way for a man to demonstrate his love and caring for his wife and children.

A new outlook emerged in the early 1970s. While men still provided the primary income for most families, increasing numbers of married women entered the labor force, more because of the financial needs of their families than because of boredom with household drudgery. Women were also pushed into the job market by divorce, which was by then rapidly on the rise.

For a variety of reasons, families had become smaller by this time. The post war baby boom was over. Highly effective contraceptive methods were on the market. While some women resented what they perceived as the devaluation of the childrearing role by the women's movement, others rejoiced to learn that there were other women who shared their desires for fulfillment in more than their roles as wives and mothers.

By 1980, the dual worker family had become the dominant family form (Pleck, 1980). Yet the values held in theory, if not in practice, about what constitutes appropriate child care are those of 30 years ago. Maternal presence in the home is still assumed (and while half of the married women with children under the age of 6 are not employed outside the home, this group grows proportionately smaller every year). Fathers are expected only to participate in the recreational aspect of child care and anything more they contribute is viewed as an "extra", not as an obligation of parenthood.

Nonparental Child Care Arrangements

Families in which both parents are employed must arrange for some form of alternative care for young children during the hours of the parents' absence. Arranging this care is a task most often assumed by mothers (Curtis, 1975; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1978). Most families use a combination of arrangements to meet their child care needs. Rowe (1978) reported that 36% of dual worker families use one type of nonparental care, 30% use two types, and 34% use three types. According to Rowe (1977), two-thirds of American families do not pay cash for nonparental care; they choose reimbursement in kind or other informal arrangements with families with complimentary needs. Brief descriptions follow of commonly used nonparental care arrangements. Day care is given greater attention than the others because it has been the focus of some controversy.

Nonparental care in the home. While it is widely used, the author knows of no systematic study of nonparental care in the home. The substitute caregiver may be a babysitter or a live-in member of the household: a grandparent, an older sibling, or a boarder who shares in child care and household tasks. In the case of affluent families a live-in housekeeper or nanny may be hired to provide child care.

Family day care. Another commonly used arrangement is family day care: care in a family setting by a nonrelative. It is generally unlicensed and privately arranged (Hoffman & Nye, 1974). In 1970, 19% of children with working parents were reportedly cared for in family day care settings (Hoffman & Nye, 1974). A more recent estimate is that close to one third of children with working parents are cared for in family day care homes (Curtis, 1975).

Parents who utilize family day care tend not to have relatives available for in-home care (Hoffman & Nye, 1974). These parents have reported several benefits of the arrangement: a family environment, contact with a small number of other children, geographical proximity (care is usually at a home in the neighborhood), and flexible hours.

Day care. The hope of the organizers of the "day care movement" of the 1960s and the fear of its opponents--that day care would become widely available through the efforts of the federal government--has not come close to being realized. While the proportion of children cared for in day care centers doubled between 1965 and 1970 (Hoffman & Nye,

1974), only 10% of children of working parents were cared for in formal day care facilities in 1977 (Rowe, 1977). More recent estimates are no higher, and some are lower (Dunlop, 1981).

There are both practical and more philosophical factors which contribute to this low percentage of use. Transportation problems, inconvenient hours of the center, age limits at the center which prevent all children a family from being cared for in one location, and needing to arrange alternative care in the event of a child's illness have been noted as reasons why families do not use day care centers (Curtis, 1975). Another factor is the lack of a sufficient number of day care facilities in densely populated urban areas. Dunlop (1981) reported that as many as 40% of the mothers surveyed in one study would use group day care if it were available.

Curtis (1975) suggests that a philosophical opposition to institutional care also prevents some families from using day care. The day care institution is viewed by some as a threat to family integrity (Clarke-Stewart, 1977). Robinson (1979) writes of the fear that "child care workers who act as surrogate parents, literally rearing today's children, may well have a more profound impact on the socialization of America's children than parents themselves" (p. 553).

Families do not avoid utilizing day care because adverse effects on children have been shown--no adverse effects have been demonstrated. Three recent research reviews (Belsky & Steinberg, 1978; Dunlop, 1981;

Etaugh, 1980) conclude that day care does not have a negative impact on children. Nevertheless, for some parents warnings voiced against day care during the 1950s and 60s are still loudly heard. In 1951 John Bowlby published Maternal Care and Mental Health, which focused on the consequences for children of extreme maternal deprivation. While Bowlby studied institutionalized infants, there followed a "dangerously unscientific extrapolation of assumptions" (Wortis, 1971), that children who spent their day in a day care institution and returned to maternal care at night would suffer the consequences Bowlby (and others, such as Spitz, 1965), had observed: intellectual retardation and an impaired ability to relate to people.

Studies which focused on the intellectual development and social-emotional behavior of children cared for in day care centers while their parents worked offer no support for this idea (Etaugh, 1980). There is also no evidence that day care disrupts children's emotional attachment to their mothers, even if care in a center began during infancy (Belsky & Steinberg, 1978; Etaugh, 1980). Often touted as a major benefit for children of day care, the opportunity for interaction with peers has also been the focus of research. Belsky and Steinberg (1978) report mixed findings: children in day care do interact more with their peers, but they are more likely to engage in positive as well as negative interactions.

To summarize, the anticipated negative effects of day care have not been demonstrated through research. It seems likely that more families would utilize day care centers if not faced with certain logistical problems, if more centers were available in certain areas, and finally if certain misconceptions about the effects of day care could be overcome.

The Mother-Child Bond

Any of the types of nonparental care discussed above are likely to have one thing in common--that the caregiver is female. This is an extension of the belief that women have a "natural" maternal instinct which enables them to respond appropriately to the needs of a young child. This belief is one element of what has been described as "the motherhood myth" (Rich, 1976) in our culture.

A prevailing cultural ideal exists of an exclusive, dyadic relationship between mother and child (Weiss, 1978). This ideal has been highlighted in the writings of psychoanalytically-oriented theorists who view the mother-infant bond as unique and necessary for the healthy psychological development of the child. Bowlby has been described as placing "almost mystical importance" on the mother's ability to meet her infant's needs (Rutter, 1972). Winnicott (1962) has written about the "good enough mother" who determines the future psychological well-being of her child by the manner in which she meets its earliest needs. Bowlby and Winnicott both insist in their writings that a mother should

give her infant's needs top priority. During the post-partum and early infancy periods these needs are thought to complement those of her own. Mahler (1975) has written of the symbiotic nature of the relationship between mother and child during this time. Later the mother must allow the child to separate and develop its own identity.

Since the burden of children's emotional well-being has been placed on women by experts from various disciplines, mothers who are absent from their children because of their paid employment may be particularly susceptible to experiencing maternal guilt. Many working mothers immediately blame themselves when their children come down with colds or have difficulties in school, even though these things are as likely to happen to children whose mothers are at home during the day (Scott, 1978). According to Rich (1976), "it is all too easy to accept unconsciously the guilt so readily thrust upon any woman who is seeking to broaden and deepen her own existence on the grounds that this must somehow damage her children" (p.204).

Hoffman and Nye (1974) report,

Initial reception of mothers into the labor force was hostile. Employed mothers were accused of being responsible for juvenile delinquency, divorce, mental illness among both mothers and children, frigidity, and other behavior considered problematic (p.11).

Because of a prevailing negative or at best ambivalent attitude toward maternal employment, researchers have looked for these and other negative effects. A large body of research has not found maternal employment to have a detrimental impact on children (Dunlop, 1981). But by

one analysis (Etaugh, 1980), a self-fulfilling prophecy may in some cases evolve. If a working mother does not feel certain that the circumstances of her employment are not harmful to her children, she may feel guilty and attempt to compensate for time denied them by "s-mothering" them. Etaugh (1980) suggests that working mothers are less likely to experience feelings of guilt if they feel certain that their children are adequately cared for in their absence. In the context of the current study, the question becomes: Can fathers adequately provide nurturance for their young children?

"Fathers as Caregivers: They Could . . . If They Had To"

Research has shown that infants must have good physical care, warm and intimate relationships with others, continuity in the people caring for them, and both verbal and nonverbal stimulation; "it has not shown that these needs must be satisfied by mothers rather than fathers, (or) by females rather than by males" (Oakley, 1972, p. 194). Data gathered during the past 10 years have shown that fathers can meet the needs of their infants and that they develop strong reciprocal attachments with their children.

Several interesting discoveries have been made through studies of fathers and infants in the first days after birth. Greenberg and Morris (1974) have defined the strong emotional reaction reported by fathers on first contact with their infants as "engrossment." This reaction, which was found to occur whether or not the fathers were present at the birth,

may be an important factor in the development of father-infant attachment.

Studying parents and their newborns 6 to 48 hours after birth, Parke and O'Leary (1976) found that fathers and mothers interacted with the infant in much the same manner. The interactive behaviors that were observed were: hold infant in arms, hand infant to other parent, change position of infant, look at, vocalize to, smile at, rock, touch, explore, kiss, imitate, and feed infant. The only difference noted was that mothers smiled at the infants more. Having completed a series of studies on fathers and newborns by 1979, Savin and Parke concluded, "fathers are as competent as mothers in providing affection, stimulation, and the necessary care" (p.509).

These studies indicate that men are capable of "appropriate" emotional and behavioral responses to their newborn infants. Many people believe, however, that females have a physiological response to infants which is not shared by males and makes them more suitable as infant caregivers. Recent research on physiological responsiveness does not support this belief. Frodi and Lamb (1978) found that pre-adolescent boys and girls showed similar physiological arousal (blood pressure, heart beat and skin conductance measures were taken) when watching a videotape of a crying baby, while neither reacted to a film of a smiling baby. The amount of experience the subjects had had with babies played no significant role in their level of arousal, causing the researchers to sug-

gest that the physiological response may be species- rather than sex-specific. This suggestion was given further support when the researchers (Frodi, Lamb, Leavitt, Donovan, Neff, & Sherry, 1978) found no difference in arousal between mothers and fathers in response to the same tape. It appears that men have the underlying physiological capacity to interact effectively with infants, "but that they have been socialized not to behave in line with this potential responsiveness" (Wolfson, 1981, p.20). Socialization also seems to offer the best explanation why men do not manifest their capacity for emotional and behavioral responsiveness to infants.

In 1972 Stone published an analysis of crosscultural data showing that American fathers spent an average of 12 minutes per day with their children (Tavris & Offrir, 1977). Ten years later, Canadian fathers (likely quite similar to their American counterparts) were found to spend 22 minutes per day engaged in child care (More stress, Note 3). Results of a recent survey of a group of parents showed that fathers were expected to assume primary responsibility for only eight of 89 childrearing tasks (Kellerman & Katz, 1978). The tasks were: teaching self-defense, teaching to drive, teaching to ride a bike, playing catch, romping and wrestling, engaging in athletics, hiking and taking trips to the zoo. Mothers had primary responsibility for 47 tasks, and the remaining 34 tasks were considered to be shared areas of parental responsibility.

It is difficult to discuss the division of child care tasks between mothers and fathers without also mentioning the division of other household chores. In families in which there is only one parent who is a wage-earner, there is generally little question that the primary responsibility for housework is that of the other parent. A recent estimate is that approximately one-quarter of American families divide responsibilities in this way along traditional sex-determined lines (Pleck, 1980).

Time use studies indicate that the distribution of housework in dual-worker families is very little different from that in homes where mothers do not work outside the home (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1978). Self-report surveys of a large number of employed married persons established that men with employed wives spent only 1.8 more hours per week engaged in housework than those with homemaker wives (Pleck, 1979). The earlier mentioned Canadian study found that men's housework participation increased even less--1.2 hours per week--when their wives were employed (More stress, Note 3). Tavriss and Offrir (1977) found that employed women have 10 hours less free time per week than employed men. The women in their study used weekends to catch up on cleaning and shopping, while their husbands used weekends to do odd chores and then caught up on their rest, watched television, or engaged in sports. Even in dual-worker families committed to equal division of parenting responsibilities housework has been found to be divided more traditionally (DeFrain, 1979).

Existing Research on Shared Parental Child Care

Recently researchers have begun to focus on the small but growing number of families in which both fathers and mothers purposefully arrange their lives to play a major role in the care of their young children. Research efforts have primarily investigated the impact on children of shared parental care or have attempted to understand the antecedents of subjects' parental role choices. Regarding the former, several positive findings have emerged.

It seems that shared parental involvement may have positive intellectual effects for children. Spelke, Zelago, Kagan, and Kotelchuck (1973) found that 1 year olds with "high interaction" fathers paid more attention to a stimulus with discrepant features than babies with "low interaction fathers". Radin (1973) found a significant correlation between the IQs of 4 year old boys and the amount of nurturance manifested by their fathers in an interview setting.

Baruch and Barnett (1981) found that preschool-age daughters derived benefit from their fathers' independent (rather than simultaneous with their mothers) caregiving activities by having less sex-stereotypic parental role perceptions. They also demonstrated less stereotypic views of their peers at a day care center. Sagi's (1981) findings suggest that daughters of fathers who are actively involved in their care are oriented toward less gender-specific self-perceptions. Shared parental care has also been found to be associated with greater inter-

nality and more internal locus of control in preschoolers (Radin, Note 1; Sagi, 1981).

Efforts aimed at understanding the antecedents of parental role choices in shared-caregiving families have not yielded an abundance of clear findings. A partial explanation for this is the complexity of factors involved. Consideration has been given in a number of studies to the sex-role orientation, attitudes about sex-appropriate behavior, conscious and unconscious motives, early life experiences, and demographic and life-style variables of both mothers and fathers as possible determinants of shared parental care.

The research findings of Bem and her associates (e.g., Bem, 1975; Bem, Martyna & Watson, 1976) suggest that androgyny is a correlate or possibly an antecedent of flexible sex-role behavior in both men and women. Russell (1981) hypothesized that fathers who share child care at least equally with their wives would be more androgynous than traditional fathers. Using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1971) he found support for this hypothesis, and found as well that these fathers scored significantly higher on the Femininity scale of the BSRI than did traditional fathers. Using the Sex Role Questionnaire devised by Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman and Broverman (1968), Wolfson (1981) also found some support for the idea that shared-caregiving fathers are as masculine as, but also more feminine than, other men.

Russell (1978) reports that mothers' sex-role orientation may be a major factor in how parents divide child care. Fathers classified as masculine on the BSRI and married to women who were classified as androgynous or high on the Masculinity scale participated more in child care than masculine fathers married to women classified as feminine on the BSRI. The psychological androgyny of mothers who share child care with their spouses is given further exploration in the current study.

Attitudes about sex-appropriate behaviors may also play a part in the decision to share child care. Wolfson (1981) found that shared-caregiving and traditional involvement fathers were significantly different on their scores on the Attitudes toward Women Scale (AWS: Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973). This measure asks respondents to rate their attitudes toward the rights and roles of women in contemporary society. The highly egalitarian views of the shared-caregiving fathers were positively correlated with the egalitarian life-style they had chosen.

It seems that mothers who are committed to shared child care would be more likely to endorse nonsexist attitudes about the rights and roles of women than more traditional mothers. In addition to having themselves chosen a nonsexist life-style, they have rejected the societal norm of having nonparental female caregivers provide care for their children in their absence from the home. This hypothesis will be tested in the present study.

The unique manner in which shared-caregiving parents approach the conflict engendered by simultaneous work and family demands may be an indication that personal standards often take precedence over group norms in their lives. In this case they may adhere to an individual belief system which values equality in parental roles over the socially-sanctioned traditional division of responsibilities. According to Loevinger's (1976) model of ego development, this would mean that they had progressed beyond the stage of conformity to generally accepted social standards and had at least reached the preconscious stage. At this stage introspection and self-consciousness are also more likely to guide their behavior than at lower stages. The present study tests whether mothers who share child care manifest a higher level of ego development than those who follow the proscriptions of traditional parental roles.

Wolfson (1981) investigated whether men committed to shared child care differed from those in more traditional father roles in two social motives. A social motive has been defined as "a recurrent goal state, usually detectable in fantasy, which demonstrably energizes, directs and selects behavior" (McClelland, 1971, p.19). Wolfson focused on the intimacy motive, "a recurrent preference or readiness, in behavior and thought, for experiences of interpersonal warmth, closeness and communion" (McAdams, 1982, p. 294), and the power motive, "a recurrent preference or readiness in behavior and thought for experiences of personal impact or strength" (McAdams, 1982, p.293-294). Wolfson proposed that fathers who choose high involvement in child care have placed themselves

in a position that is characteristic of the goals of intimacy motivation, and therefore are likely to be higher in intimacy motivation than fathers who demonstrate less involvement in child care. Conversely, while adults who rear children do have power over children's behavior, this is not a power which is given social recognition, and therefore low power motivation might be characteristic of the shared-caregiving father. Wolfson found no significant difference between shared-caregiving and traditional involvement fathers in either intimacy or power motivation as indicated by their responses to the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT; Murray, 1943). Both groups of fathers were in fact similar in their considerably higher than average scores on the the intimacy motive and considerably lower than average scores on the power motive.

Without a specific hypothesis, Wolfson (1981) also explored the possibility of differences in achievement motivation between the two groups of fathers. Using the subjects' scores on the Work and Family Orientation Questionnaire (WOFO; Helmreich and Spence, 1978) as a source of information about their achievement motivation, Wolfson found the shared-caregiving fathers to have less of a preference for difficult, challenging tasks, but not to differ from the more traditional fathers in the other three aspects of achievement motivation which the WOFO measures.

Early life experiences may also be important in determining why women and men choose parental roles which certainly differ from the cul-

tural norm and likely also differ from the parental roles their own parents assumed. Radin (1981) found that women whose husbands were more involved in caregiving had fathers who had been less involved in child care than fathers of women whose husbands were less involved in caregiving. This seemed to be explained by the perception of the women who shared care with their spouses that the limited contact with their fathers had been pleasurable and something of which they had wanted more. They seemed now as parents to be concerned that their children would receive more of this positive paternal contact.

Russell (Note 3) found that men whose mothers worked outside the home were more likely to participate in child care than men whose mothers were not employed. DeFrain (1979) found that half of the mothers of men and women who shared child care had worked outside the home before their children completed high school. Since paid employment was considered primarily a masculine activity while the subjects in these studies were children, Wolfson (1981) hypothesized that shared-caregiving fathers would be more likely than traditional involvement fathers to have mothers who were androgynous in their sex-role orientation. The hypothesis was not supported in his study, causing Wolfson to suggest that more specific current factors may have been at work.

Attempts to understand the influence of the behavior of the fathers of men who share child care have proved inconclusive. Neither a compensatory hypothesis (shared-caregiving fathers are compensating for

having had a less nurturant, less involved father) nor a modeling hypothesis (the shared-caregivers are modeling themselves after their own nurturant fathers) seem adequately to explain this influence. DeFrain (1979) found that involved fathers explained their behavior in terms of both imitation and counter-imitation of their fathers while Radin (Note 2) found no confirmation of either hypothesis.

Shared parental child care also seems to be associated with certain demographic and life-style characteristics. Other researchers have found that in shared-caregiving families mothers tend to be better educated (Russell, 1981), more likely to work full-time (Russell, 1979), and more likely to share housework with their spouses (Wolfson, 1981) than in more traditional families.

Summary and Hypotheses

The literature reviewed above presents the background for the current study. More traditional child care arrangements of two-parent American families in which both parents work were discussed, as were the cultural myths about the behavior of mothers and fathers which reinforce more traditional female-dominated arrangements. Evidence supportive of the idea that men are fully capable of responding to the needs of young children was presented.

Some families in which both parents seek active involvement in family and occupational roles have already been studied. The results of

these studies suggest that women and men are influenced by psychological factors and early life experiences in their choice of shared parenting roles. They also suggest that demographic and life-style variables are related to their parental role choice. In this study the following hypotheses are being tested:

1. Working mothers who share child care with their spouses are more psychologically androgynous than those whose spouses do not share child care.
2. Working mothers who share child care with their spouses are more egalitarian in their attitudes about sex-appropriate behavior than those whose spouses do not share child care.
3. Working mothers who share child care with their spouses manifest a higher level of ego development than those whose spouses do not share child care.

In the current study the power and intimacy motivation of the subjects were studied, but no hypotheses were formulated about the direction of differences in motivation between the two groups. The same is true for achievement motivation. Data were gathered on the subjects' motivation to provide a compliment to the findings of Wolfson (1981) and for exploratory purposes.

Although no specific hypothesis was formulated, possible influences of the mothers of women who share child care were also given some attention in the current study. It is also anticipated that demographic

and life-style differences will emerge between families in which mothers and fathers share both caregiver and wage-earner roles, and those in which the role of caregiver is construed traditionally, although the role of wage-earner may be shared.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Subjects

Both shared parental care and traditional, limited father involvement group subjects are the spouses of men who were previously recruited by Wolfson (1981) for his research on shared-caregiving fathers in intact families. As data were being collected for that project, many of the current subjects indicated their interest in and willingness to participate in a study similar to the one in which their husbands had participated. No financial compensation was offered to the subjects for their participation.

Thirteen of the wives of the 15 shared-caregiving men who had participated in the original study agreed to participate in the current study. These 13 women included three subjects who resided out-of-state and with whom there was contact only by mail. After their original agreement to participate in the study, two subjects withdrew from participation; one of these was an out-of-state resident. No data were collected from either of these women. The shared parental care group thus contained 11 subjects.

Ten of the wives of the 15 traditional fathers who participated in the original study agreed to participate in the current study. Two subjects did not return their questionnaires after several reminders thereby reducing the traditional group to eight subjects.

Wolfson defined a shared-caregiving father as "being, by choice, significantly involved in the care of his child or children under the age of 5 years to the extent that he had sole responsibility for the care of this child or children for at least 15 hours per week" (1981, p. 37). A traditional father was defined as having sole responsibility for the care of his child or children under the age of 5 for less than 15 hours per week. The stipulation that the shared-caregiving fathers had assumed this role by choice was made to eliminate men who were in a shared-caregiving situation out of necessity, such as physical disability or unemployment. Results of a study of shared-caregiving families in which this stipulation was not made suggest that the psychological characteristics of those who choose this type of family involvement are quite different from those who have not had the freedom of choice (Russell, 1981). This distinction is also relevant to the current study of shared parental child care.

According to Wolfson (1981), the shared-caregiving fathers were originally contacted through the mailing list of a publication concerned with men and child care and through personal contacts. In contrast the traditional fathers were recruited through several university-based

preschools. Wolfson noted that it had surprisingly been more difficult to recruit traditional than shared-caregiving subjects; under 5% of the fathers from each pre-school agreed to participate in the study. The traditional fathers who did agree to participate seem to have been a self-selected group, who by virtue of their willingness to volunteer their time for research on fathers were perhaps less traditional than most fathers of young children.

It is also interesting to note that the difficulty in obtaining traditional fathers which Wolfson (1981) remarked upon was mirrored in the lower participation rate of the wives of these men in the current study. Mothers and fathers who share child care may have a greater need or feel it is more important to talk about their innovative parenting arrangements than do more traditional parents. A recency effect may also have affected the participation rates since the shared-care mothers were generally contacted somewhat earlier by the researcher than the other mothers.

The mean age of the shared-care group was 32.09, while that of the traditional group was 35.12, a difference which approached statistical significance $t(12.33) = 1.99, p < .07$.¹ This finding necessitated that the contribution of age be controlled for in analyzing differences on the dependent measures.

¹. In this and subsequent between group comparisons reported, corrected degrees of freedom are given when separate rather than pooled variance estimates were used in computation.

The mean age of their spouses was found to be similar for each group, $t(16.30) = 1.04$, n.s., as was the mean length of marriage, $t(16.61) = .34$, n.s. Demographic data for the two groups, including self-descriptions of ethnic background and religious affiliation are presented in Table 1.

Wolfson (1981) reported that the families of the subjects were similar on a general socioeconomic rating and also did not differ greatly in the socioeconomic rating of their families of origin. More detailed analysis of the subjects' level of education and occupational attainment was conducted in the current study and is presented below.

The two groups were similar in the number of children they had, $t(16.23) = 1.21$, n.s., as well as in the age of their oldest child, $t(16.90) = .31$, n.s. Largely due to three newborn infants among the children of the shared-care mothers, the mean age of the youngest child of this group was 1.8 years while that of the youngest child of the traditional group was 3.8 years. An analysis of covariance with age of the subject as the covariate established the significance of this difference, $F(1,16) = 5.75$, $p < .03$, and also yielded a trend toward a contribution of age to the difference, $F(1,16) = 3.8$, $p < .07$. In other words, younger mothers, who tended to fall into the shared-care group, were also likely to have younger children.

The mothers in the shared-care group had more sons, (a mean of 1.09 boys per family vs. .25 for the traditional group, $t(16.15) = 2.81$,

TABLE 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristics	GROUP			
	Shared-Care		Traditional	
	Mean	<u>N</u>	Mean	<u>N</u>
Age	32.09	11	35.12	8
Age of Spouse	33.54	11	34.75	8
Length of Marriage (years)	7.91	11	8.25	8
Subjects' Ethnic Background				
Anglo Saxon/Northern European		6		6
Eastern European		1		2
American		2		0
Sicilian		1		0
Jewish		1		0
Subjects' Religion				
Catholic		4		3
Protestant		1		3
Jewish		2		0
Agnostic		1		0
None		3		2

Note. Subjects named ethnic background categories.

A trend toward a group difference was observed for Subjects' Age,

$t(12.33) = 1.99, p < .07.$



$p < .01$), while those whose husbands were more traditional and limited in their involvement had more daughters, (a mean of 1.25 girls per family vs. .73 for the shared-care group, $t(15.32) = 2.42$ $p < .03$). Information about the subjects' children is summarized in Table 2.

The reader who refers to Wolfson (1981) will find that descriptive information presented about the subjects and their children in that study and the current one are similar, but not identical. The differences may be attributed to two factors, both related to the passage of time. The subjects who participated in this "follow-up" study are a subset of those who participated in the first study; group scores (e.g., means) reflect this difference in group composition. Secondly, the mean age of the subjects' oldest child has increased at the same time that new births lowered the mean age of the youngest child. Subjects whose children no longer met Wolfson's criterion of being under the age of 5 were not disqualified from this study. In all cases the subjects had at least one child who had not yet begun attending first grade and thus still required a substantial number of hours of direct daily care.

Measures

The Demographic Data form, a revision of the Personal Data form used by Wolfson (1981) was used to obtain identifying data on the subjects as well as background information about their family members. It also asked for some information about the subjects' life-styles.

TABLE 2
Information about the Subjects

Characteristics	GROUP			
	Shared-Care		Traditional	
	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>
Number of Children	1.81	.60	1.50	.54
Age of Oldest Child	4.79	2.24	5.06	1.47
Age of Youngest Child	1.78	1.20	3.80	1.66*
Number of Male Children	1.09	.83	.25	.46***
Number of Female Children	.73	.47	1.25	.46**

Note. The age of the oldest child ranged from two to nine years. The age of the youngest child ranged from two months to six years.

* $F(1,16) = 5.75, p < .03.$

** $t(15.32) = 2.42, p < .03.$

*** $t(16.15) = 2.81, p < .01.$

A short form of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1974) was used to obtain a rating of the subjects' psychological androgyny. This questionnaire requires subjects to provide self-ratings on 21 bipolar items describing personal characteristics which are divided equally among three scales: Masculinity (M), Femininity (F), and Masculinity-Femininity (MF). Each item is scored from 0 to 4, with a high score on items from the M and MF scales indicating an extreme masculine response and a high score on F scale items indicating an extreme feminine response. Total scores are obtained on each scale by adding the scores on the seven items. Helmreich and Spence (1978) present a scheme for classifying individuals based on a median split: Subjects who rate themselves above the mean on both the M and F scales are described as androgynous in sex-role orientation. Those whose scores are below the mean on both the M and the F scales are described as undifferentiated in sex-role orientation. A high score on the M scale coupled with a low score on the F scale yields a classification as masculine, while the reverse yields a classification as feminine in sex-role orientation. Median scores used in this comparison are from research with college students of both sexes. Research has shown that the short form of the PAQ is satisfactorily reliable in comparison with the original 55 item version (Helmreich & Spence, 1978).

The Attitudes toward Women Scale (AWS; Spence et al., 1973) originally consisted of 55 statements describing the rights and roles of women in contemporary society. The authors of the scale have come to

recommend the use of a 15-item version which produces scores which correlates highly with the full scale (Spence and Helmreich, 1978). Subjects respond on a 4-point scale, ranging from "Agree strongly" to "Disagree strongly." Each item is scored from 0 to 3, with 0 indicating a traditional attitude toward women's rights and roles, and 3 indicating endorsement of an egalitarian, nonsexist attitude. Subjects' scores are obtained by summing the item scores.

The Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT; Loevinger & Wessler, 1978) was devised to assess respondents' stage of ego development. The 12-item sentence completion task is similar to those instruments used in projective personality assessment. In this study the female version of the shortened WUSCT was administered. The work of Loevinger (1976; 1979) and her associates suggests that one difference between subjects who score at higher rather than lower stages on this measure is the ability or propensity to question simple dictates of convention. Respondents who score in the top four of the eight stages of ego development which Loevinger has identified are likely instead to value an individual belief system.

The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT; Murray, 1943) was used to assess subjects' power and intimacy motivation. In order of administration subjects were asked to respond to pictures of (a) two figures sitting on a park bench, (b) a man sitting at a desk upon which rests a photograph of a family, (c) two female scientists in a laboratory, (d)

an woman and a girl sitting together surrounded by various objects, and (e) a young boy sitting on a doorstep. Pictures (a) and (b) can be found in McClelland and Steele (1972), picture (c) can be found in McClelland (1975), and pictures (d) and (e) are from the original Murray (1943) set.

The Work and Family Orientation Questionnaire (WFOFQ; Helmreich & Spence, 1978) assesses several aspects of achievement motivation from subjects' scores on four subscales: Work (positive attitudes toward work), Mastery (the preference for difficult, challenging tasks), Competitiveness (the desire to succeed in competitive interpersonal situations), and Personal Unconcern (the lack of concern about possible negative interpersonal consequences of achievement). Subjects respond to the items on a 5-point scale ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree." These items are scored from 0 to 4, with 0 indicating a score of low achievement motivation, and 4 indicating a score of high achievement motivation. Item scores are summed to obtain the scores for each subscale.

Finally, information was gathered during a short interview about the current life-styles of the subjects. The interview focused on child care arrangements and involvement in child care and housework of the subjects and their spouses. The interview questions are reproduced in Appendix A.

Procedure

All subjects were initially contacted by phone or by a letter describing the study and asking for their participation. Those subjects contacted by mail were asked to indicate their willingness to participate by returning a stamped postcard to the researcher. The questionnaires were then sent to each subject accompanied by a letter which reiterated what their participation would entail and assured them that they could withdraw from participation at any time that they desired. Instructions for completing the measures and a statement of informed consent to be signed and returned with the completed questionnaires were also sent. The Demographic Data form, the Personal Attributes Questionnaire, the Attitudes toward Women Scale, the Washington University Sentence Completion Test, and the Work and Family Orientation Questionnaire were mailed to the subjects. In the case of the two out-of-state subjects, the packet also contained the interview questions, to be answered in writing. As it was impossible to assure a controlled administration of the TAT for the out-of-state subjects, this was not attempted.

Once the subjects had completed the questionnaires, they were instructed to mail them back to the researcher or, in some cases, they returned them to the researcher at the time of administration of the TAT and the interview. This second stage of participation generally took place in the subjects' homes. Two subjects preferred to meet with the researcher at her office to complete their participation in the study.

The TAT cards were routinely administered before the interview. Each subject was given standard instructions: to write a short imaginative story with a past, present, and future in response to the stimulus card. Five minutes were allowed for each story. After the TAT was completed, the interview was conducted and audiotaped, with the prior written consent of each subject. Each TAT/interview session lasted approximately 1 hour.

Scoring and data analysis. The Personal Attributes Questionnaire, the Attitudes toward Women Scale, the Washington University Sentence Completion Test, and the Work and Family Orientation Questionnaire were scored in their standard manners. The TAT stories were scored for power and intimacy motivation using the systems devised respectively by Winter (1973) and McAdams (1980). The means for the two groups on all the measures were compared using a t -test.

Background and life-style data gathered from the Demographic Data form and the interview were also compared using a t -test. In order to make specific comparisons of the occupational status of the subjects, their spouses and their parents, the time-honored system of occupational ranking devised by Hollingshead and Redlich (cited in Myers & Bean, 1968) was applied. The ranking system is reproduced in Appendix B.

Because the two groups were almost significantly different in age, an analysis of covariance with age of the subject as the covariate was performed on those dependent measures which appeared to differentiate

the groups. The results of these analyses are reported only when age was found to make a significant contribution to the variance.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Principal Hypotheses

The first hypothesis proposed that working mothers who share child care with their spouses are more psychologically androgynous than those whose spouses are not shared-caregivers. There was partial support for this hypothesis.

The two groups of mothers were not significantly different in their scores on the M or F scales of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire. The mean score for the shared-care group on the M scale was 19.91, and the traditional group had a mean score of 18.38, $t(15.55) = .88$, n.s. The mean score for the shared-care group on the F scale was 21.09 and for the traditional group the mean score was 21.00, $t(17) = .09$, n.s. There was a trend, $t(16.92) = 1.46$, $p < .08$, for the shared-care group to score higher than the traditional group on the MF scale, which is scored in the masculine direction. The mean score of the shared-care group was 14.73 while the traditional group had a mean score of 12.50 on this scale. The two groups did not differ in the number of subjects in each who could be classified as androgynous in sex-role

orientation by the median split method described above, $t(15) = 1.10$, n.s. These results are summarized in Table 3.

A highly tentative interpretation of the results may be made. It appears that working mothers who share child care with their spouses tend to describe themselves as being as feminine as but somewhat more masculine than those whose spouses do not share child care. The somewhat more androgynous self-description for this group of subjects is consistent with the findings of Bem (1975) and Bem et al. (1976) of a positive correlation between androgyny and flexible sex-role behavior.

The results also appear to mirror those of Wolfson (1981) for shared-caregiving fathers. The men in Wolfson's study who were actively involved in child care described themselves as being as masculine as but more feminine than other men. If taken in conjunction with Wolfson's findings, the findings of the current study also seem to support Russell's (1978) finding that shared parental care is more likely to occur in a family if mothers are androgynous or masculine in sex-role orientation.

The second hypothesis proposed that working mothers who share child care with their spouses would have more egalitarian attitudes about sex-appropriate behavior than working mothers whose spouses are not shared-caregivers. This hypothesis was not supported. The mean score on the Attitudes toward Women Scale for the shared-care group was 40.81; for the traditional group the mean score was 39.12, $t(11.77) = .71$, n.s.

TABLE 3
 Personal Attributes Questionnaire Scores

Scale	GROUP				
	Shared-Care		Traditional		<u>t</u>
	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>	
Masculinity Scale	19.91	3.80	18.38	3.70	.88
Femininity Scale	21.09	2.50	21.00	1.80	.09
Masculinity-Femininity Scale	14.73	3.80	12.50	2.90	1.46
Percentage of Androgynous Subjects	64%		38%		

Note. A trend toward a group difference was observed for the Masculinity-Femininity Scale ($p < .08$, one-tailed).

It is not immediately apparent why women who have chosen a family life-style based on symmetrical parental roles would not demonstrate a significantly more egalitarian attitude with regard to the sex-appropriateness of behavior than women who have chosen a more traditional, sex-determined division of parental roles. It appears as if they adhere to a principle of equality in parenting, without necessarily believing that this equality must extend to other areas of women's and men's lives. Or it may be that a double standard exists. The shared-care mothers seem to allow greater freedom in their own role choices and behavior than they are willing to allow other women. Neither of these interpretations support Komarovsky's (1979) suggestion that women are less likely to push for equality in private areas of their lives than they are in the outside world.

Another possible explanation is that the questionnaire chosen to measure the subjects' attitudes, the Attitudes toward Women Scale, has become dated. It was developed 10 years before the current study was conducted, with items selected on the basis of female role perceptions at that time. These items may no longer be sufficiently subtle to allow discrimination of attitudes in a group as homogeneous as the participants in the current study. If this explanation is valid, differences between groups in attitudes about the sex-appropriateness of certain behaviors might appear if measured differently.

A related explanation is that both groups of women scored similarly on the Attitudes toward Women Scale because of a response bias--i.e., notions about variables of interest in the current study or a set to appear enlightened and nonsexist in their views. The groups may then differ in that the shared-care mothers are more likely to behave in accordance with the attitude they endorsed on the questionnaire, perhaps because of a stronger commitment to this view.

The third hypothesis proposed that working mothers who share child care with their spouses manifest a higher level of ego development than those whose spouses are not shared-caregivers. This hypothesis was not supported. The Washington University Sentence Completion Test yielded a mean score of 4.64 for the shared-care group and 5.00 for the traditional group, $t(11.01) = 1.11$, n.s.

It was thought that the utilization of shared parental care as the primary child care method might be indicative of the acceptance of an individual belief system over the cultural norm of maternal responsibility for child care. The scores on the sentence completion measure from both groups of mothers indicate a less conformist and more conscientious (Loevinger, 1976) internalized level of development. However, since the measure was not created to obtain information about the specific content of the value systems which respondents have internalized, this information must come from another source. In the current study this information was missing. In future research similar to the current study,

parents might be asked directly about values which may have been behind their choice of child care arrangements. An interview format which would allow access to subjects' conscious motivations and values might be a more appropriate tool in this than the less specific understanding made possible by the sentence completion test. Wolfson (1981) devised such an interview for use with shared-caregiving fathers and obtained some information about the subjects' childrearing values. The same remains to be done with mothers who share child care with their spouses.

Other Findings

Primarily to provide a complement to the findings of Wolfson (1981), two measures were administered to subjects in the current study without the formulation of specific hypotheses. These measures were the TAT and the Work and Family Orientation Questionnaire.

Scores for power and intimacy motivation derived from the subjects' TAT stories did not differentiate the two groups of mothers. Subjects in both groups were considerably higher in intimacy motivation than in power motivation. This duplicates Wolfson's (1981) finding for shared-caregiving and traditional involvement fathers. It may be that the life situation of parents of young children is particularly salient in bringing to the surface an orientation toward "experience of interpersonal warmth, closeness and communion" (McAdams, 1982, p.294).

The members of both groups of working mothers were also similar in all four aspects of achievement motivation which the Work and Family Orientation Questionnaire measures. This is in contrast to Wolfson's (1981 finding that shared-caregiving fathers were significantly lower than traditional involvement fathers on the Mastery subscale of this measure.

The influence of the mothers of women who have chosen the roles of shared-caregiver and worker outside the home was explored by analyzing three variables: their levels of education, their work outside the home while the subjects were children, and the status of their occupations. As all analyses are post hoc in nature, the results must be interpreted with caution.

The first variable, level of maternal education, produced a significant difference, $t(15.63) = 2.83$, $p < .01$, between the subject groups. The shared-care group subjects, on the average, had mothers who had completed at least some college study. In contrast, the mothers of the traditional group subjects, on the average, had only completed high-school. Approximately half of the women in the shared-care group and half of the women in the traditional group had mothers who worked outside the home while they were children, $t(12.69) = .10$, n.s. Both groups of subjects were similar, $t(12.53) = .07$, n.s., in the status of their mothers' occupations. These occupations all fell into the categories of minor professionals, clerical workers, and technicians.

It is difficult to interpret the isolated finding of a higher level of maternal education for the women in the shared-care group. It is possible that their mothers trained for careers they never pursued, presumably because of child care responsibilities. This may in some way have influenced the manner in which their daughters have chosen to manage dual roles. More intensive focus on the families of origin of mothers who share child care with their spouses is needed for the relationship between characteristics of these women and their mothers to clearly emerge.

The finding that an equal proportion of women in the shared-care and traditional groups had mothers who worked outside the home suggests that this is a variable on which shared-caregiving women and men differ. Russell (Note 2) found that having a mother who worked outside the home increased the likelihood of participation in child care for men. For the women in this sample, maternal employment did not seem to differentially affect their choice of maternal role.

Demographic and Life-Style Variables

The shared-care and traditional group mothers were highly similar in their own and their spouse's level of education. Most members of each group had at least a college education.

Two of the shared-care families had only one wage-earner, both mothers, and one of the traditional families had only one wage-earner, a

father, at the time the data were collected. The working mothers from both groups were similar in their occupational status, $t(16.38) = .48$, n.s. On the average, they were salaried professionals such as teachers, social workers, and business managers. The working mothers were also similar in the number of hours per week that they worked for pay. $t(14.92) = .53$, n.s. On the average, women in both groups were employed between 25 and 30 hours per week.

There was a significant difference, $t(17) = 2.44$, $p < .02$, in the occupational status of the spouses of the two groups of mothers. The occupations of the fathers who share child care were on the average of considerably lower status, falling into the categories of sales, small business, and technical work, than those of the more traditional fathers. The occupations of the traditional men were, on the average, in major and minor professional categories. The occupational data on the subjects and their spouses are summarized in Table 4.

The finding of a significant difference between the career status of men who share child care and those who are less actively involved in caring for their children is an interesting one. Since the two groups of men are highly similar with respect to factors such as age and education which are usually correlated with occupational prestige, others explanations of this finding must be sought. A possible explanation lies in Wolfson's (1981) finding that shared-caregiving fathers were lower than the traditional fathers on the Mastery subscale of the Work

TABLE 4
Occupational Data

	GROUP				
	Shared-Care		Traditional		<u>t</u>
	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>	
Hours Worked for Pay per Week					
Subject	28.82	13.20	25.50	13.70	.53
Occupational Status					
Subject	2.18	.87	2.00	.76	.48
Spouse	3.18	1.50	1.75	.71	2.44*

Note. Occupational Status is reported using the Occupational Ranking System in Appendix B.

* $p < .03$.

and Family Orientation Questionnaire. The lower score indicates less motivation for difficult, challenging tasks (e.g., building a professional career) in comparison with the traditional fathers. As Wolfson suggests, the shared-caregiving fathers may be slightly less achievement oriented than most men, and their lower achievement motivation may be a significant factor in their limiting career development for the sake of involvement in child care. Wolfson did not report having found lower career status for the shared-caregiving fathers, possibly because he used a less specific measure of occupational classification than was used in the current study. It should also be recalled that the subjects in the current study provided data on a subset of the subjects studied by Wolfson.

Support for the idea that men who choose active involvement in child care must expect to pay a price for their choice in the occupational world comes from a study by Berger and Wright (1978). These authors reported that the business world is not supportive of male role change. In a simulation experiment they found that executives were less likely to approve a paternity leave than a maternity leave, and that they were more likely to consider a man applying for such a leave as unsuitable for their organization. The choice of a major role in child-rearing, even at the cost of career advancement, seems to indicate that shared-caregiving parents accept the idea that,

the intense and profoundly personal experience of parenting has intrinsic rewards (and anxieties) that may far exceed whatever external trappings of success or failure the career world has to offer (Darley, 1976, p.80).

The subjects were also requested to provide specific information about how child care and housework responsibilities were handled in their families. Data were analyzed on the number of hours per week that mothers in each group were solely responsible for child care, and the total number of hours per week that they were available for interaction with their children. The difference between groups in the mean number of hours of sole responsibility for child care was not significant. A trend, $t(11.98) = 1.83$, $p < .09$, for the shared-care mothers to have, on the average, less hours available for interaction with their children each week did not prevail when mother's age was taken into consideration, $F(1,12) = 1.76$, n.s. There was a trend, $F(1,12) = 3.68$, $p < .08$, for older mothers, more likely to fall into the traditional group, to be available for interaction with their children a greater number of hours per week.

The shared-care mothers reported that they divided child care approximately equally with their spouses when both parents were at home. On the average, they reported that they attended to their children's needs 53.8% of the time in this situation. In contrast, traditional mothers reported that on the average they attended to their children's needs 66.0% of the time in this situation. These findings do not represent a statistically significant difference, $t(5.35) = 1.72$, n.s. They are, however, remarkably similar to those reported by the men in Wolfson's (1981) study, and suggest the general consistency of the division of child care responsibilities in these families. The reader is again

reminded that the subjects in the current study are a subset of the spouses of Wolfson's subjects.

The shared-caregiving fathers reported that they attended, on the average, to 49.7% of their children's needs when both parents were at home. The traditional fathers reported that they attended to the needs of their children 32.3% of the time. The difference in the participation of the fathers when both parents were at home was highly significant ($p < .003$, Wolfson, 1981). This suggests that the smaller number of subjects (data were available from only 15 subjects on this variable) in the current study prevented a similar result. The findings on the division of child care responsibilities when both parents are at home are summarized in Table 5.

Turning to selected aspects of child care (feeding, diapering, bathing, and dressing), the shared-care mothers reported that on the average they performed these tasks 59.9% of the time. The traditional mothers reported that they performed them, on the average, 74.1% of the time. This did not represent a significant difference between groups, $t(7.31) = 1.54$, n.s.

Wolfson (1981) analyzed similar data and found that shared-caregiving fathers claimed responsibility for these tasks an average of 58.3% of the time, and traditional fathers claimed responsibility for the tasks 28.1% of the time. The data from traditional mothers and fathers is highly consistent, while there is considerable discrepancy in

TABLE 5
 Percentage of Care by Mothers and Fathers
 When Both Parents Are At Home

Provider of Care	GROUP				<u>t</u> or <u>F</u>
	Shared-Care		Traditional		
	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>	
Mother (present study)	53.8	8.4	66.0	14.7	1.72
Father (Wolfson, 1981)	49.7	10.8	32.3	13.3	10.4*
TOTAL	103.5		97.3		

Note. All data are percentages based on self-report.

* $p < .003$.

the reports of the shared-care parents. Although not put to statistical test, a possible explanation is that the three mothers of new babies in the shared-care families who decided to breastfeed their infants provided a greater percentage of care at the time of the current study.

Finally, selected aspects of housework (cooking, laundry, vacuuming, cleaning, and making beds) were also examined. The shared-care mothers reported responsibility for these tasks an average of 63.5% of the time, while the traditional mothers reportedly performed them an average of 82.7% of the time. The existence of a significant difference between groups was established by an analysis of covariance with age of the subject as the covariate, $F(1,12) = 8.02$, $p < .01$. This analysis also yielded a significant contribution of subject's age, $F(1,12) = 6.10$, $p < .03$, indicating that older women, who were more likely to be in the traditional group, also tended to do more housework.

There was a discrepancy in the reports of both groups of mothers and fathers on this variable. Shared-caregiving fathers reported attending to these housework tasks an average of 58.7% of the time. Traditional fathers reported doing so an average of 25.1% of the time. The data on participation in selected aspects of child care and housework by mothers and fathers are summarized in Table 6.

The reports of the fathers were similar to their reported participation in selected child care tasks. According to the mothers' reports, the fathers' participation in housework was much lower. It may be that

TABLE 6
 Comparison of Mothers and Fathers on Selected
 Child Care and Household Tasks

	GROUP				
	Shared-Care		Traditional		<u>t</u> or <u>F</u>
	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>	
Percentage of Feeding, Diapering, Bathing, and Dressing					
Mother (present study)	59.9	12.6	74.1	20.5	1.54
Father (Wolfson, 1981)	58.3	9.5	28.1	1.7	5.42*
Percentage of Cooking, Vacuuming, Cleaning, and Making Beds					
Mother (present study)	63.5	10.5	82.7	13.0	8.02**
Father (Wolfson, 1981)	58.7	3.9	25.1	3.2	13.30*

Note. All data are percentages based on self-report.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

a difference in the number of subjects in the two studies was responsible for this discrepancy, or it may be that the division of housework in these families has changed over time. The division of housework reported by the mothers is congruent with the results of other studies (e.g., DeFrain, 1979; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1978).

Concluding Comments

The significant results presented and discussed in this chapter are few; of the three principal hypotheses, only one was given partial support. The finding that mothers who share child care were somewhat more androgynous in self-description than more traditional mothers is consistent with the existing, rather limited, research on shared-care-giving families. All other significant differences between groups were found post hoc, and therefore must be interpreted with some caution. These findings are perhaps most useful for pointing out directions for future research.

A complex relationship is suggested between the characteristics of shared-care mothers and those of their own mothers by the finding of significantly higher levels of education for the latter than for the mothers of the traditional subjects. More intensive focus on the families of origin of women who have dual roles and manage child care responsibilities by sharing care with their spouses is needed in order to understand the relationship which appears to exist.

Although the subjects in the current study represent a very small sample of the population from which they were drawn, the finding of demographic and life-style differences between groups validates that women and men who choose to share child care have chosen a life-style which is quite different from that of other young working parents. A partial explanation of the finding that fathers who share care had lower status careers than men who were less involved in child care suggests that this choice has certain costs. One reward of shared parental care is the involvement of both parents in the daily lives of their children. Although the current study did not assess this directly, the existence of life-style consequences supports the idea that the decision to share care is highly value laden.

The study also allowed for observation over time and across informants of some areas of the lives of parents who share child care. It was necessary to treat these comparisons with particular caution since the subjects in the current study were only able to provide information about a subset of those subjects studied originally.

Several factors may have contributed to the paucity of significant differences between the two groups of mothers in this study. Since the study included only a small number of subjects, the likelihood that group differences would not be found statistically significant even if they actually existed was increased. A second methodological factor which may have contributed was the manner in which the subjects were

selected in the original study by Wolfson (1981). Wolfson noted that similarities between the two groups of fathers, which resulted from self-selection of the traditional group in the direction of greater than average interest in fatherhood, were unintended. The similarities between their spouses were also likely to have created unintended similarities between the two groups of mothers in the current study. These methodological difficulties may be avoided in future research by the inclusion of more subjects and by use of another method to select a more traditional subject group.

A final suggestion to future researchers who plan to utilize a longitudinal perspective in studying nontraditional child care arrangements is not to anticipate consistency in specific aspects of child care. The results of the current study suggest that while families may have an overall philosophy about the division of child care (or household) responsibilities, they are not likely to be locked into a specific division of child care (or household) tasks. Some shared-care mothers in this study reported that they assumed near exclusive care for an infant while their spouses attended to essentially all of the physical needs of an older child. Other shared-care mothers provided much more than half of the daily care for their children at the time of the current study--a reversal of the situation when Wolfson (1981) studied the families and the father was the primary caregiver. Although such switches might suggest a change to a traditional arrangement, these families had not abandoned a commitment to shared parental care; rather

they managed their commitment by alternating primary caregiver and wage-earner roles.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

This study sought an understanding of some of the psychological characteristics of working mothers who share care of their young children with their spouses. Toward this end two groups of married working mothers, who differed in the child care arrangements they had selected, were compared. The arrangements were defined by their inclusion of fathers in child care. The shared parental care group was committed to major involvement by both parents in the care of young children. The second group of working mothers assumed the traditional maternal role of greater involvement in child care when they were at home and relied primarily upon nonparental care in their absence from the home. Fathers also played a traditional, less involved role in child care in these families. Both groups of women are the spouses of men Wolfson (1981) recruited for his research on shared-caregiving fathers.

Three principal hypotheses were advanced with regard to differences between the shared-care and the traditional mothers. It was predicted that the mothers in the shared-care group would be, on the average, more psychologically androgynous, more egalitarian in their attitudes about sex-appropriate behavior, and higher in their level of

ego development in comparison with the traditional group. The first hypothesis was partially supported by a nonsignificant trend ($p < .08$). The shared-care mothers described themselves as more masculine than but as feminine as other women. The second and third hypotheses were not supported.

It was also anticipated that there would be early life differences between the two groups of women. Exploration of possible influences of their mothers yielded the finding that women who share child care with their spouses had mothers who were significantly more educated than but not different in occupational status from the mothers of the traditional group.

There were also significant differences between the shared-care and the more traditional mothers on a number of demographic and lifestyle variables. The spouses of the shared-care group tended to be significantly lower in the status of their occupations than the spouses of the traditional group. Since the men were similar in other factors which are usually correlated with occupational prestige, such as age and education, the difference may be related to the active involvement in child care of the spouses of the shared-care group. There is also the possibility, suggested by Wolfson (1981), that lower achievement motivation may serve as an intervening variable in the behavior of fathers who are involved in child care.

The shared-care and traditional mothers also differed significantly in their reports of the division of housework with their spouses. While both groups of women assumed greater responsibility for housework than did their spouses, the spouses of the shared-care group did significantly more housework than those of the traditional group.

Comparison with results reported by Wolfson (1981) showed considerable consistency, over time and across parents, for both shared-care and more traditional families in the overall division of child care responsibilities when both parents are at home. There was less consistency when specific child care tasks were considered. This suggests that while families may adhere to an overall philosophy about child care roles, they are less likely to hold to a specific division of individual tasks.

Suggestions for future research include use of a larger number of subjects. The small number of subjects included in the current study reduced the likelihood of finding statistically significant group differences. An alternative method of subject selection would likely prevent the difficulty which Wolfson (1981) noted, and which by extension influenced the results of the current study, with regard to self-selection of a less than traditional comparison group.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. A. How many hours per week are you the sole caregiver for your child/children under 5 years old? (Note: Sole caregiver includes when spouse is at home but is not available for child care.) _____
 - B. How many _____ of these hours is the child/children awake? _____
 - C. What is your spouse doing during this time?
 - D. For how many total hours per week, including the above but not including the time that you are asleep, are you available for interaction with your child/children under 5 years old? _____
2. A. What is your and your spouse's current employment pattern (e.g., both work full-time; one works while the other is at home, etc.)?
 - B. If both work full-time, whose employment is given greater priority in such things as job related moves, making accommodations in daily routine of other spouse and children, etc.?
 - C. Economic aspects aside, would you continue to work outside the home? _____
Would your spouse? _____
 - D. How long have you been in this pattern? _____
 - E. Did your employment pattern change when your first child was born? If so, how?
 - F. Did it change when a subsequent child was born?

3. A. What are your arrangements for child care for your child/children under 5?
- B. When did you decide on these arrangements?
- C. Why did you decide on these arrangements?
- D. Who was most responsible for deciding on these arrangements?
- E. How long do you plan to continue with these arrangements?
- F. Have you ever considered or wanted a different arrangement? If so, what? Why haven't you changed?
- G. What do you like or dislike about your current arrangement? (How far is it from the ideal?)
- H. What do you think the advantages/disadvantages are for your child/children?
 - I. For the family as a whole?
 - J. For yourself?
 - K. For your spouse?

4. Of the total amount of time that you and your spouse do each of the following tasks for your child/children under 5, what percentage of the time does each of you do each task?

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Self</u>	<u>Spouse</u>
a. Feeding		
b. Diapering		
c. Bathing		
d. Dressing		
e. Getting up in the middle of the night if the child awakens		
f. Reading stories		
g. Taking child to doctor/dentist		
h. Playing indoors		
i. Playing outdoors		
j. Playing with toys		
k. Playing physically (tickling, rough-and-tumble, etc.)		
l. Adult activities (shopping, cooking, cleaning, etc. with the child)		
5. Of the total amount of time that you and your spouse do each of the following household tasks, what percentage of the time does each of you do each task?		
a. Cooking		
b. Taking out garbage		
c. Washing dishes		
d. Laundry		
e. Vacuuming		
f. Other cleaning		
g. Making beds		
h. Household repairs		
i. Grocery shopping		
j. Clothes shopping for children		
k. Car maintenance		
6. When you and your spouse are both at home, what percentage of the time does each of you perform caregiving activities (not playing with or entertaining) your child/children under 5?		

Self _____

Spouse _____

APPENDIX B

OCCUPATIONAL RANKING SYSTEM

The following Occupational Ranking System is reproduced from Myers and Bean (1968).

Class I. Business executives, professionals in private practice, and proprietors of large concerns.

Class II. Business managers, salaried professionals, and proprietors of medium-sized concerns.

Class III. Technicians, clerical and sales workers, and small business proprietors.

Class IV. Skilled manual workers.

Class V. Semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Karin Ruetzel has been read and approved
by the following Committee:

Dr. Jeanne M. Foley, Director
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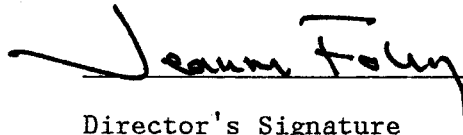
Dr. Al DeWolfe
Professor, Loyola University

The final copies have been examined by the Director of this thesis
and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that the
thesis is now given final approval by the Committee with reference
to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

11-18-88

Date


Director's Signature