

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: AN EXAMINATION OF THE NARRATIVES OF  
MEN IN POWER-SHARING MARITAL  
RELATIONSHIPS: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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One of the distinguishing characteristics of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century is the dramatic change in the work and family roles of mothers in the United States. Despite evidence indicating that managing the multiple roles of work and family is healthy for both men and women, and that couples in equitable marriages report higher levels of relationship satisfaction and stability, marital partnerships often fall prey to traditional roles. In the vast majority of heterosexual marriages, men continue to hold the power. For true equality to exist, men and women need to share roles and, ultimately, power.

The present study examined the lives of men in power-sharing marriages. The purpose of this study was to develop a framework for understanding what motivates men to pursue a non-traditional path and engage in power sharing marital relationships, where partners hold mutual status, actively negotiate roles, share

decision-making and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks. This research was a qualitative study of 13 men in this type of power-sharing marital relationship. These men self-identified as power-sharing and eligibility was confirmed by the primary researcher. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-person interviews.

The emerging theoretical framework suggests that the participants followed a complex path that led them to a power-sharing marital relationship. The path was composed of contextual spheres of influence (the sociopolitical context, the family of origin, the community and the academic environment) which worked together to foster the development of societal (justice, gender equality, equity) and interpersonal (mutual respect, reciprocity, family-first, complex connection with partner) values. In turn, the theory proposes that these values inspired the men to embrace a power-sharing orientation. The path did not end for these men with the initiation of the power-sharing marriage because the men in this study constantly confront challenges and rely on facilitators in order to maintain their power-sharing status.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE NARRATIVES OF MEN IN POWER-SHARING  
MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
2008

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DEDICATION

To my extraordinary family:

Drew Ades

Zoe Ades

Jordan Ades

You are my inspiration.

Your boundless support, love and encouragement made this work possible.

You fill my heart with love and hope.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my committee members, Dr. Ruth Fassinger, Dr. Clara Hill, Dr. Mary Ann Hoffman, Dr. Brenda Jones-Harden and Dr. William Strein for their insights and thoughtful ideas and suggestions that helped shape this research.

I will be forever grateful to Ruth Fassinger, my advisor, for her encouragement throughout my graduate career. I thank her for being my strong advocate and for supporting my unique, individual journey.

The present study required the effort of several individuals. I thank my research team for their hard work and commitment. The following individuals deserve special recognition for contributing their time and talent at crucial times in this process: Drs. Beth Sperber Richie, Nancy Hensler, Catherine Sullivan and Julie Arseneau.

Drew Ades is my husband and power-sharing partner. He was my inspiration for this project – the world would be a better place if there were more husbands, and people, like him. He deserves more credit for this work than he will ever get in his lifetime. I thank him for his unwavering faith, support and love throughout this process and my entire graduate career.

Finally, I thank the thirteen men who participated in the present study for sharing their life stories. I truly appreciate their time and energy.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century is the dramatic change in the work and family roles of mothers in the United States. From 1975-2004, the labor force participation rate of mothers with children under the age of 18 rose from 47% to 71% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004). These statistics indicate significant growth in the number of dual-earner families in the U.S. White and Rogers (2000) found the two-earner family to be the norm among married couples of all races. Not only are mothers working and contributing to the family income, over 40% of working mothers are now earning as much as, or more than, their partners. In fact, all of the increases in median income for married couples during the 1990s were due to the economic contributions of wives (White & Rogers, 2000). It would be sensible to expect that these changes would automatically stimulate a shift in the traditional relationships between gender, work and family.

However, the rise in dual earner families has ignited significant controversy, and in many ways, traditional gender roles have remained firmly entrenched. One controversial issue has been whether employment is beneficial or harmful to mothers and families. Barnett and her colleagues (e.g., Barnett, 2004; Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Barnett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992) decided to examine this issue closely. These scholars have found that women with multiple roles often exhibit better mental and physical health than women with fewer roles. Research consistently has supported the finding that women who are employed outside the home show less psychological distress than mothers who stay at home full time (e.g., Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Crosby, 1991; Kandel, Davies, & Raveis, 1985; Wethington & Kessler, 1989).

Maternal employment improves women's psychological health by serving as a source of independent identity, by increasing self-esteem and by enhancing social support (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003).

Barnett & Hyde (2001) explain that employment also can provide a "buffering effect" (p. 786). The negative effects of stress or failure in one role can be buffered by successes or satisfactions in another role. In other words, the stress that mothers experience in one role can be moderated by success in a different role. Therefore, employment can reduce the stress associated with the care of small children, and, in turn, rewarding relationships with one's children can assuage negative aspects of employment.

These benefits and positive effects also have been indicated for men who occupy multiple roles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Barnett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992; Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003). Barnett and her colleagues empirically studied the relationship between men and multiple role management and found that the relationship between a father's psychological distress and his job experiences was moderated by his family roles just as has been found for mothers (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Barnett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992). When fathers have positive relationships with their wives, children, or both, poor experiences on the job do not increase psychological distress. Both men and women cite a number of benefits of multiple role engagement: self-identity development, better psychological well-being, increased financial resources, improved parenting, and enhanced social support (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003).

Overall, the multiple role literature indicates that the psychological and physical health of men and women is improved when they broaden their gender role expectations. Similar effects have been found in the marital quality literature. Couples who eschew rigid gender roles report higher levels of marital quality (Johnson, 2003; Gottman, 1999, 2004). There is research evidence documenting that gender stereotyped roles have negative effects on relationship stability and satisfaction (Johnson, 2003), and equal sharing of roles and power seems to predict relationship longevity and satisfaction for both men and women (Gottman, 1999; Gottman & Silver, 1999; Lavee and Katz, 2002). Specifically, researchers have found that husbands, regardless of age, who become more liberal in their gender role attitudes, report increases in positive marital quality and declines in the negative aspects of marriage (Amato & Booth, 1995; Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2006). The implication of these results is that when men adopt nontraditional gender attitudes, stress can be reduced in contemporary marriages, and marital happiness increases.

Occupying multiple roles and holding nontraditional gender role attitudes seem to predict well-being and marital health. However, despite these findings, deeply ingrained gender stereotypes make it difficult for both men and women to break free from socially constructed roles. Strong pressures at the individual, interactional, and institutional level pull mothers and fathers back toward old gender stereotypic behavior (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005). Mothers continue to assume the primary responsibility for the care of the children and the household labor (Crosby, Williams and Biernat, 2004; Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer & Robinson, 2000; Ozer, 1995); mothers do nearly two-thirds of the housework and twice as much of the

custodial care of the children (Bianchi, 2000). Clearly, there is a conflict between what evidence suggests is best for the well-being of families and the actual practices of these dual-earner families.

Milkie, Bianchi, Mattingly and Robinson (2002) examined the idea of “the ‘stalled revolution’ – the uneven changes that have occurred in gender ideologies and the structures of work and family institutions” (p. 21). Mothers have invested more time and energy in the paid labor force; however “fathers’ complementary behavior in family caregiving has not changed as quickly” (Milkie et al, 2002, p. 21). Fathers’ involvement in housework and childrearing has increased, but it does not nearly meet mothers’ involvement despite the fact that mothers’ financial contributions meet those of fathers.

Milkie, Bianchi, Mattingly and Robinson (2002) found that the uneven social changes in mothers’ and fathers’ work and family lives contribute to higher stress levels in mothers. In addition, mothers report increased feelings of unfairness in the household division of labor. Many mothers comfortably are allocating more time for paid employment, and therefore are expecting fathers to put more time into childcare and household responsibilities. However, it appears that men are less likely to adapt their behaviors, and they tend to consider small changes to be sufficient; therefore, mothers continue to feel stressed and overburdened and the benefits of multiples roles described above are compromised.

There is a strong relationship between maternal depression and perceived inequity in child care and household chores (Bird, 1999; Glass & Fujimoto, 1994; Hoschild, 1989; Ozer, 1995). That is, employed women appear to experience greater

stress and dissatisfaction when they are expected to cover the “second shift,” the work related to household and child care responsibilities that remains after paid employment is done (Hoschild, 1989). Research indicates that levels of distress can be mediated by perceived partner involvement. A woman’s belief that her partner will assist with childcare and household chores is a robust predictor of well being (Ozer, 1995). The implication of this research on the unequal division of household and childcare tasks (Bird, 1999; Glass & Fujimoto, 1994; Hoschild, 1989; Milkie, Bianchi, Mattingly & Robinson, 2002; Ozer, 1995) is that multiple roles can be both beneficial *and* a source of strain for mothers, depending on level of paternal involvement. Multiple role management can be overwhelming when mothers cannot count on the involvement of their partners. When fathers become involved in household management and childcare responsibilities, the benefits of multiple roles are increased and maternal stress is reduced significantly.

In addition to bearing the overwhelming responsibility of household management and childcare, mothers are also far less likely than men to engage in leisure activities. Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) collected time diary data to assess gender differences in both quantity and quality of free time. Mattingly and Bianchi concluded definitively that women experience less free time than men. In addition, mothers tend to bear sole responsibility for children during their free time. Findings also indicate that men experience a greater subjective net benefit from their free time than do women. Since mothers’ spheres become so blurred, there is spillover from work and household responsibilities to leisure activities. Women have less time to relax and refresh, and the time they do have often is contaminated by other activities

or altered by women's childcare and household responsibilities. Clearly, there is a gendered leisure gap favoring men.

The gendered division in household labor, leisure time, and employment continues because of the persistence of sex-stereotyped roles and gendered expectations in society. Research indicates that positive and negative perceptions of mothers and fathers are influenced by the parents' social roles and whether the roles are traditional or non-traditional (Ades & Fassinger, 2004; Brescoll and Uhlmann, 2005; Etaugh & Folger, 1998; Riggs 1997; 1998). Employed mothers consistently are viewed negatively where employed fathers consistently are viewed highly positively (Ades & Fassinger, 2004; Brescoll and Uhlmann, 2005; Etaugh & Folger, 1998; Riggs 1997; 1998). However, a mother who sacrifices financial rewards so that she can stay at home with children receives high approval, and fathers who do not fulfill the stereotypic male obligation of financially providing for the family receive low approval ratings (Etaugh & Folger, 1998; Riggs 1997; 1998).

Stay-at-home fathers and fathers who work part-time suffer some of the most negative perceptions (Ades & Fassinger, 2004; Brescoll and Uhlmann, 2005; Etaugh & Folger, 1998; Riggs 1997; 1998). They are considered far less competent than men who are employed full-time (Ades & Fassinger, 2004; Etaugh & Folger, 1998; Riggs 1997; 1998), and Brescoll & Uhlmann (2005) found that participants viewed the stay-at-home father *most* negatively and perceived him to be the worst parent in their study. In addition, perceived social regard was lowest for stay-at-home fathers. Despite evaluating employed mothers negatively, participants felt that society generally would respect employed mothers and perceive them as successful. Stay-at-

home fathers appeared to be neither liked nor respected (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005). Perhaps these fathers who stay at home or who are employed part-time are viewed not just as men who don't work but as men who can't work full-time because they are deficient in skills or lacking ambition. This social stigma is likely to make fathers reluctant to assume a domestic role, and, in turn, limits mothers' employment opportunities and serves as an important barrier to gender equality both in the home and in the workplace.

Ades and Fassinger (2004) found that despite being considered deficient in nurturing qualities, employed mothers still were expected to carry out significantly more day-to-day domestic and expressive behaviors than employed fathers. When comparing mothers and fathers occupying the same social role, results indicated that it is the mothers, regardless of employment status, who were expected to carry out the majority of day-to-day childcare and household responsibilities.

The entrenched, socially dictated roles of mothers and fathers and the social stigma associated with men and women in nontraditional roles make the possibility of marital equality quite challenging. The number of women and men who claim to endorse egalitarian relationships has increased steadily over the last several decades; however, inequality persists as the norm in marital relationships (Rosenbluth, Steil & Whitcomb, 1998). This dichotomy has inspired many scholars to investigate heterosexual marriage in order to identify the characteristics of marital equality and to discover the processes necessary to achieve it.

Researchers have studied couples who identify as egalitarian and/or feminist in attempt to understand the phenomenon of marital equality. (Blaisure and Allen,

1995; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005; Rosenbluth, Steil & Whitcomb, 1998; Zimmerman, Haddock, Current & Ziemba, 2003). When examining this research in the aggregate, findings suggest that marital equality contains the following characteristics: partners hold equal status; domestic tasks and responsibilities are shared; there is mutual respect and support between partners; there is mutual attention to the other in the relationship; decision-making is shared; and there is a mutual sense of well-being of the partners.

It is clear that paternal involvement in the family is a vital component in marital equality and for gender equality more generally. Paternal involvement can foster the positive effects of multiple roles for mothers and, in turn, reduce maternal stress and increase well-being. In addition, when fathers do assume a nurturing role, they are positively changed by their experiences (Kimmel, 2004). Full family involvement is a nontraditional role for fathers; therefore, men lack socialization in this role and are subject to a negative social stigma when engaging in domestic roles and responsibilities. Understanding what inspires men to counter the entrenched, socially constructed beliefs about fatherhood is crucial in the fight toward marital and gender equality.

Four categories that influence father involvement have been posited in the literature (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov & Levine, 1987): motivation to be involved in children's lives; skills and self-confidence in the fathering role; social support and stresses; and institutional factors such as job characteristics. Quantitative research examining these categories has produced fairly intuitive, rather than innovative, results. Not surprisingly, research findings have indicated that nontraditional beliefs

about fathering are related positively to father involvement (Jacobs & Kelley, 2006). Results also indicate that men's parenting self-efficacy is correlated with father involvement – high parenting self-efficacy predicted more responsiveness among fathers. In addition, the greater number of hours men worked outside the home, the less responsibility fathers took for childcare. On the other hand, the more hours mothers worked outside the home, the more accessible fathers were to their children (Jacobs & Kelley, 2006). These results indicate the importance of structural and behavioral variables in the outcome of father involvement; however, they do not explain deeper, psychological or emotional processes involved in paternal involvement. This correlational quantitative research does not provide any causal explanations for paternal involvement nor does it explain the evolution of variables such as gender ideology, parenting self-efficacy or amount of time involved in paid employment.

Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006) sought to understand the intricacies of how men become involved fathers and the social context in which this development occurs. Five interrelated factors were identified that contributed to or impeded father “responsivity”: These five conditions that help men engage with their children are the following: 1) *egalitarian gender ideology* – where men do not assume that women are primarily responsible for children; 2) *valuation of women's work* – where women's work is as highly valued as fathers' work; 3) *perceptions of choice* – where fathers perceive choice about their work lives; 4) *equal power and indebtedness* – where relationships are organized around equality rather than gender and neither partner

feels emotionally indebted to the other; and 5) *men's emotional attunement* – where fathers attend to the feelings and needs of their children and partners.

This research on paternal involvement does describe some conditions and variables that are evident in fathers' participation. Yet, this research does not provide insight into how men can be empowered to eschew strongly ingrained social norms to become power-sharing fathers. The economic reality is that many mothers need to be part of the workforce, and dual-earner families are now the norm. In addition, multiple roles and non-gendered role sharing are associated with beneficial effects for individual and marital stability. However, despite these strong reasons for dismantling gender stereotyped roles and behaviors, marital partnerships fall prey to traditional roles, and in the vast majority of heterosexual marriages, men continue to hold the power and their wives carry out the “second shift.” For true equality to exist, men and women need to share all roles and, ultimately, the power.

The goal of the present study was to identify factors that facilitate men's willingness to engage in marital relationships where roles and power are shared with their wives. This investigation included the examination of the behaviors, attitudes and feelings that motivate and encourage fathers to seek out relationships where power and roles are shared.

There was a lack of strong theory to guide this examination. The increase of mothers in the workforce coupled with the benefits of nontraditional gender roles highlighted the need for in-depth research to uncover motivators that encourage men to engage in nontraditional power-sharing marital relationships. Qualitative methodology was appropriate for the type of in-depth analysis that was required in

this project. Meaning was brought to the surface through the participants' deep reflection facilitated by the interactive researcher-participant dialogue. The idea was that by using qualitative methods, the researcher could uncover intricate details about the phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The present study, therefore, utilized qualitative interviews with men who are actively engaged in power-sharing marital relationships where partners hold equal status, actively negotiate roles, share decision-making and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks. Qualitative approaches, grounded theory in particular, frequently have been utilized when exploring and explicating previously untapped phenomena. For the purposes of the present study, a grounded theory method of analysis was utilized in the pursuit of insight and understanding related to the attitudes, inspirations, and experiences of power-sharing men.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The goal of the present study was to convey a framework for understanding the facilitators that encourage men to engage in power-sharing marital relationships. These power-sharing marital relationships, defined initially by the researcher as marriages where partners hold equal status, actively negotiate roles, share decision-making and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks, seem essential with the increasing number of dual-earner families in the U.S. Employment roles increasingly are being shared between marital partners; therefore, it seems logical that the roles associated with childcare and household management would also follow this trend. If domestic roles are not shared among partners, and traditional gender roles are enacted in this arena, employed women will continue to bear the responsibility for the home. This review of the literature examines the benefits of power-sharing relationships, the challenges men face in engaging in these types of relationships, and the factors associated with marital equality. Therefore, this review covers the following seven topics: (a) The Dual-Earner American Family, (b) Multiple Roles, (c) Gender Roles and Marital Satisfaction, (d) The Division of Family and Household Care, (e) Perceptions of Parents in Non-Traditional Roles, (f) Marital Equality and (g) Predictors of Paternal Involvement in the Family. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the meaning of “power” from a feminist theoretical perspective as well as a discussion of the utility of qualitative methodology in the examination of paternal involvement in the family and men’s engagement in power-sharing heterosexual relationships.

*The Dual-Earner American Family*

A major development in the American workforce has been the increased labor force participation of women. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, women now constitute 48% of the U.S. labor force. In 2004, 75% of women aged 25-54 were in the labor force. From 1975 to 2004, the labor force participation rate of married mothers with children under the age of 18 rose from 47 to 71%.

These statistics indicate that, over the past several decades, the United States has seen a significant rise in dual-earner families. In fact, White and Rogers (2000) found the two-earner family to be the norm among married couples of all races. Working wives' contributions to family income grew significantly between 1973 and 2003, and in 2003, wives' earnings accounted for 35 percent of their families' incomes. The proportion of wives earning more than their husbands also grew. In 1987, 18 percent of working wives whose husbands also worked earned more than their spouses; in 2003, this proportion was 25 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004). Clearly, wives' earnings make a significant contribution to overall family resources. In fact, all of the increases in median income for married couples during the 1990s were due to the economic contributions of women (White & Rogers, 2000).

Despite the benefits of the dual-income family, many gendered expectations have proven incredibly resilient and have served to limit women's choices in the workplace. Because mothers are expected always to be available to their children, many more mothers than fathers have opted for part-time employment or for less socially desirable full-time jobs that have predictable and/or flexible schedules

(Crosby, Williams & Biernat, 2004). The wage gap is closing for women without children; however, employed mothers still earn 60% of what working fathers earn. Crosby, Williams, and Biernat (2004) explain that this difference can be attributed to unfriendly workplace conditions that are still “defined around men’s bodies – since men need no time off for childbirth – and men’s life patterns, as American women still do 70-80% of the child rearing” (p.677). Workplaces continue to be structured around an assumption that paid employees have a full-time adult at home who takes care of all the non-paid labor. In addition, mother’s wages are less competitive due to the type of lower paying employment women are forced to maintain because of childcare and household responsibilities (Crosby, Williams & Biernat, 2004).

### *Multiple Roles*

Many have questioned whether the nontraditional role of worker is beneficial or harmful to mothers. Barnett and her colleagues (e.g., Barnett, 2004; Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Barnett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992) have reviewed the existing literature and have conducted their own empirical research on this topic and have found that women with multiple roles often exhibit better mental and physical health than women with fewer roles. Barnett (2004) reports the findings of one longitudinal study that examined the relationship between women’s labor force participation and psychological distress (Wethington & Kessler, 1989). These researchers found that women who increased their workforce participation – from no employment to either part time or full time employment – showed lower levels of depression over the three-year period of the study. Over the same period of time, employed women who decreased their hours of paid employment reported an increase

in symptoms of depression. In their review, Barnett and Hyde (2001) cite a number of studies that support the finding that mothers who are employed outside the home show less psychological distress than mothers who stay at home full time (e.g., Crosby, 1991; Kandel, Davies, & Raveis, 1985; Kessler & McRae, 1982). Barnett and Hyde (2001) suggest that maternal employment is a source of independent identity, increased self-esteem, and enhanced social support. Although several studies report no significant difference in psychological distress between employed and nonemployed mothers (e.g., Baruch & Barnett, 1986; Repetti & Crosby, 1984), Barnett and Hyde (2001) conclude that since no studies found employed women to be more depressed than their nonemployed counterparts, multiple roles are not harmful to women and are likely advantageous.

Kessler and McRae (1982) studied the effects of mothers' employment on the mental health of men and women. Evidence from a large national survey (N = 2,440 US adults) indicated that employment outside the home is associated with improved mental health among married women. Further, findings indicated that, although the presence of preschool-aged children in the home was associated with psychological distress among women, employed mothers with preschool-aged children showed significantly less distress than the mothers who stayed home full-time. This effect remained even when the number of children was controlled. Barnett and Hyde (2001) explain that employment provides a "buffering effect": the negative effects of stress or failure in one role can be buffered by successes or satisfactions in another role. These same positive effects have been indicated for men who occupy multiple roles. Barnett and her colleagues found that men also benefit from their multiple roles as

employee, spouse and father. One study showed that the relationship between a father's psychological distress and his job experiences was moderated by his family roles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Barnett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992). In other words, when male respondents had positive relationships with their wives, their children, or both, poor experiences on the job did not significantly increase psychological distress.

Haddock and Rattenborg (2003) studied the perceived benefits and strains of dual-earner couples who balance family and work. Using qualitative methodology, forty-seven heterosexual couples were interviewed in the study. The couples were eligible if they were married, each spouse completed at least 35 hours per week of paid employment, the couple had at least one child under the age of 12 and both partners wanted to participate in the study. In addition, to be eligible, couples had to agree with five statements that defined "success" in balancing family and work.

Results identified a cluster of benefits as well as challenges for the couples engaged in multiple role negotiation. The couples' descriptions of benefits clustered into six themes: modeling an egalitarian relationship, increased self-identity and well being, increased financial resources, time away from children (which led to better parenting), beneficial social networks through the workplace, and improved social and intellectual skills for their children. Two themes emerged when couples discussed challenges of multiple roles: lack of support by places of employment and sporadic feelings of guilt – men felt guilty that they were not earning enough that their wives could stay home full-time, and women felt guilty that they could not always be available to either their children or their employer. Haddock and Rattenborg (2003) support the conclusion that combining family and work is not either beneficial or a

source of strain but is both beneficial and a source of strain. The benefits identified by the couples in this study support the findings of Barnett and her colleagues. The challenges identified by the couples in this study seem to point to barriers set up by social ideologies and structural dynamics. Many scholars argue that until institutions and cultural ideologies change to fit new realities, dual-earner couples will continue to face obstacles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003).

One major limitation of the vast majority of the multiple role literature is the homogeneous samples studied. Participants were predominantly White, highly educated, middle to upper-middle class individuals. In most of the dual-earner families studied, partners were working to maintain a particular lifestyle or to satisfy individual needs. There is a dearth of research on multiple roles among women and men for whom dual employment is a means of survival. It is difficult to predict how benefits or challenges may be similar or different for low-income families where dual employment is not a choice.

#### *Gender Roles and Marital Satisfaction*

The majority of multiple role literature cited here indicates that the loosening (or broadening) of strict gender roles proves to be beneficial to both men and women. Similar results have been found in relation to the quality of the marital relationship: those couples who eschew rigid gender roles report higher levels of marital satisfaction, stability and quality. Many couples researchers have found a relationship between gender roles and relationship satisfaction or stability (Johnson, 2003; Gottman, 2004, 1999). Research evidence indicates that strict adherence to traditional gender roles has negative effects on relationship stability (Johnson, 2003). On the

other hand, when husbands and wives share roles, marriages are more resilient, and the partners report higher marital satisfaction (Gottman, 1999; Gottman & Silver, 1999).

Amato and Booth (1995) studied longitudinal data from a national sample of married individuals to examine how changes in gender role attitudes over an eight-year period were related to reported changes in marital quality. Results of this research show that husbands who became more progressive in their gender role attitudes from 1980 to 1988 reported increases in positive marital quality. Increases in egalitarian ideology also were associated with declines in reports of negative aspects of marriage. The implication of this study is that when men adopt nontraditional gender attitudes, the stress is reduced in contemporary marriages, and marital happiness increases.

A potential limitation of Amato and Booth (1995) is that the researchers experienced significant attrition in the second and third wave of their longitudinal data collection. The attrition resulted in a sample that was slightly unrepresentative with respect to the proportions of African Americans, Latino, young respondents, and those without a college education. Therefore, although the first wave was highly representative of all groups, the latter data were more limited to an educated, White sample. In addition, the husbands and wives in the sample were not married to one another, so the researchers could not examine changes in spouses' attitudes in relation to their partners' attitudes.

Kaufman and Taniguchi (2006) examined the effect of gender ideology on marital happiness in later life. The researchers used data from married individuals

who ranged in age from 51-92 years old and were members of the 1994 Iowa Youth and Families Project panel on grandparents. The sample included 678 married individuals, 228 men, and 450 women. Results of this study support the idea that egalitarian attitudes benefit marriage. As with younger men (Amato & Booth, 1995), Kaufman and Taniguchi found that older men who endorse an egalitarian gender ideology report higher levels of marital satisfaction. There are some limitations to this study worth noting. First, the sample is limited to older, married individuals in rural Iowa. These individuals are likely to produce a unique and selective sample, as they have remained married for so long. In addition, every individual in the sample was a grandparent. These individuals may have generally higher levels of marital happiness than individuals who are not grandparents because previous research shows a positive relationship between grandparenthood and general life satisfaction (Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2006).

Lavee and Katz (2002) approached the study of gender attitudes and marital quality by examining the way in which household tasks are allocated within the marital relationship and the resulting effects on marital satisfaction. The sample consisted of 1124 individuals with a nearly equal division of men and women. Generally, results indicated that the perception that the division of household work is personally unfair leads to lower level of perceived marital quality for both men and women. In addition, when family work was shared equally, there was a higher evaluation of marital quality among respondents.

*The Division of Family and Household Care*

Although evidence suggests that traditional gender roles have negative effects on marital stability and that equal division of household labor increases marital satisfaction, entrenched, socially constructed gender roles make it difficult for both men and women to break free from social tradition. Therefore, despite women's increase in labor force participation, mothers continue to assume an inordinate proportion of the child care responsibilities and household labor (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer & Robinson, 2000; Ozer, 1995).

Milkie, Bianchi, Mattingly and Robinson (2002) examined the uneven changes that have taken place in work and family life. Mothers have entered the workforce in record numbers and thus are contributing to the family income; however, fathers have not altered their roles significantly. Fathers' participation in the household has increased but it does not nearly meet mothers' involvement. Mothers do nearly two-thirds of the housework and do twice as much of the care of the children (Bianchi, 2000). Milkie et al (2002) addressed the following research questions: 1) What are U.S. mothers' and fathers' beliefs about the ideal gender division of childrearing in different domains of parenting?; 2) How do they view the actual gender division of childrearing in each parenting domain?; 3) In which domains are ideal-actual parenting gaps most obvious, and are these similar for mothers and fathers?; 4) Do gaps between ideal and actual levels of father involvement relate to well-being for mothers and/or fathers?

The findings suggest that the uneven social changes in mothers' and fathers' work and family lives may have produced discrepancies between what parents see as

ideal and what actually occurs in families. Although highly egalitarian ideals generally were shared among participants, mothers and fathers did not view actual parenting practices the same way. Mothers reported less father involvement across all spheres than fathers did. Ideal-actual discrepancies were related to well-being: if fathers were seen as less than ideally involved in nurturant parenting, parents reported more stress. Less than ideal father involvement in disciplining children was associated with mothers' higher stress levels, and the discrepancy in expectations about father involvement in play and monitoring children was correlated with mothers' increased feelings of unfairness in the household division of labor. These discrepancies may reflect the uneven changes in gender role expectations. Many mothers with egalitarian ideals are comfortable breaking a traditional mold and putting more time into paid employment. In tandem, they expect fathers to put more time into childcare and household responsibilities. However, men have been slow to adapt their behaviors, and they often consider small changes to be sufficient; therefore, mothers likely continue to feel stressed and overburdened.

Several studies have demonstrated a link between an unequal division of labor and women's levels of depressive symptoms (Bird, 1999; Glass & Fujimoto, 1994; Ozer, 1995). As an example, Ozer (1995) examined the relationship between childcare responsibilities, a woman's belief that she could rely on the help of her spouse, and psychological well-being. Forty-two professional women were interviewed for this study. Telephone interviews of 30-45 minutes were conducted, and self-efficacy scales and psychological health measures were administered through the mail. Although the mothers in this study had similar professional status as their

husbands and were contributing half of the family income, mothers still reported being responsible for the majority of childcare. The findings of the studies showed that more childcare responsibility was related to greater distress among employed mothers. However, levels of distress could be mediated by perceived partner involvement. The analyses suggest that when a working mother believed that she could not get her husband to assist with childcare and/or family demands, the result was poor psychological health. A woman's belief in her ability or inability to get her partner to assist with childcare was the most consistent predictor of both well-being and distress. Women who perceived that they had the majority of day-to-day responsibility and could not enlist their husbands for help expressed feeling overwhelmed and dissatisfied. However, when partner support was expected, the level of distress decreased and well-being increased. The one major limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size and the fact that the sample consisted of primarily White, professional women. The findings cannot assume to be generalized to employed mothers of different socioeconomic and racial ethnic groups.

Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) collected time diary data to assess gender differences in both quantity and quality of free time, including measures of contamination of free time by nonleisure activities such as household chores, the fragmentation of free time, and how frequently children's needs must be accommodated during free-time activities. According to Mattingly and Bianchi, "free time or leisure is an important aspect of daily life. Leisure affords individuals a chance to relax and refresh after performing household and labor market responsibilities. Through such time, individuals can escape some of the more tedious

aspects of life and realize opportunities for personal growth” (p. 1000). Feminist researchers argue that free time is especially problematic for women because the boundaries between unpaid domestic responsibilities and free-time activities are often unclear (Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003).

Mattingly and Bianchi collected the data for this study using random-digit dialing and Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) procedures. The final sample included 1,132 respondents (481 men, 651 women). Based on the interview data, the researchers concluded definitively that women experience less free time than men. In addition, mothers tend to bear sole responsibility for children during their free time. Findings also indicate that men experience a greater subjective net benefit from their free time than do women. “If women have a more interconnected work-family life experience, they may not get as much practice at turning off the concerns of one sphere when they enter another. This may spill over into their leisure experiences as well” (Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003, p. 1024). Another possibility for this difference in benefit of free time suggested by Mattingly and Bianchi is that women may view themselves as less deserving of free time and experience more guilt associated with it. Since household labor is undervalued and may be viewed as less arduous than outside employment, women may be considered less deserving of leisure time.

This research suggests that women experience lower-quality free time and less total free time than men, likely as a result of their heavier burden of traditional caregiving responsibilities. Women have less time to relax and refresh and the time they do have is often contaminated by other activities or altered by women’s

childcare and household responsibilities. Clearly, there is a gendered leisure gap favoring men.

### *Perception of Parents in Nontraditional Roles*

The gendered division of household labor, child care, and employment continues because of the persistence of sex stereotyped roles and expectations in society. Research indicates that positive and negative perceptions of mothers and fathers are influenced by the parents' social roles and whether the roles are traditional or non-traditional. Riggs (1997; 1998) and Etaugh and Folger (1998) studied the perceptions of mothers and fathers in various social roles. The participants were college students from majority White colleges who participated for course credit. Students were randomly assigned to research conditions where they read information about a mother or father who was either employed or who stayed at home full time. The researchers investigated the difference in ratings between the targets who conformed to societal gender role expectations and those who did not.

Overall, there was a tendency to give employed mothers lower approval ratings than unemployed mothers. When mothers were employed for reasons of personal fulfillment, they were given the lowest approval rating. Of the employed target persons, fathers who worked for financial reasons received the highest approval ratings. The unemployed father who had previously worked for financial reasons received the lowest approval ratings relative to the male target persons. In addition, men employed full-time were rated as far more competent than fathers who did not work outside the home or who reduced work hours. The researchers believe that these findings support the notion that deviations from gender-role expectations are

perceived negatively. Therefore, a man who deviates from the traditional stereotype will be devalued. There is a double standard in perceptions of employed parents. When a father does not fulfill the stereotypic male obligation of financial providing for the family, he receives low approval ratings. However, a mother who sacrifices financial rewards so that she can stay at home with children receives high approval. The authors suggest that those who violate societal mandates will suffer lower approval and those who adhere to societal mandates will enjoy higher approval.

Ades and Fassinger (2004) compared perceptions of women and men who occupy the same social role (i.e., stay-at-home parent or employed parent). The focus was on how differently men and women may be perceived in the same social role. The majority of previous research examined either stereotypically male traits or stereotypically female traits; this study examined both simultaneously (i.e., both expressive characteristics and instrumental characteristics were evaluated for all the target persons in the study). In addition, past research primarily utilized subjective evaluations alone to measure perceptions. The work of Biernat and her colleagues (e.g., Biernat, 1995; Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997) has indicated that in order to assess adequately the true nature of sex stereotyping, both objective (behavioral) and subjective (trait) measures need to be utilized. Therefore, Ades and Fassinger included both objective and subjective measures in gathering perceptual information.

Further, this study examined the perceptions of men and women not only in the employed and the stay-at-home roles, but also added a new dimension, the part-time role. There are a significant number of part-time workers in the United States;

therefore, the researchers believed that perceptions regarding these individuals would provide important information.

College students were recruited as the participants for this study because it was important to obtain a non-biased sample, one where the participants were not currently occupying the social roles under investigation. With college students, it was assumed that the participants were in the formative stages of career (and family) planning but had not begun to manage the career/family balance. Married students and students who are parents were excluded from the study. Two hundred and fifty-three participants were recruited. The sample was diverse in terms of participants' major fields of study and was representative of all four years of college.

Six stimulus paragraphs were created for the study. The stimulus consisted of a short paragraph describing a mother or a father and her or his employment status. Although there were six stimulus paragraphs in the overall experiment, each participant was presented with only one of the six stimuli. The six stimuli were: (1) mother who stays home full-time, (2) mother who is employed part-time, (3) mother who is employed full-time, (4) father who stays home full-time, (5) father who is employed part-time, and (6) father who is employed full-time.

After reading the descriptions of one of the six targets, participants were asked questions regarding their perceptions of the target person. They were asked for their perceptions regarding the target's expressive and instrumental traits as well as expressive/nurturing behaviors. Overall, results suggest that sex stereotyping persists, and that non-traditional women and men suffer the consequences. Findings showed that the mother employed full-time was viewed as significantly less nurturing than the

father employed full-time and the stay-at-home parents. When a woman deviates from the role expected of her, she is thought to possess less of the traditional female qualities of nurturance and expressivity. However, the data also show that, despite being considered deficient in nurturing qualities, employed mothers were expected to carry out significantly more day-to-day domestic and expressive behaviors than the employed father. Another target in a non-traditional role, the stay-at-home father, was viewed as deficient in stereotypic male traits. He was perceived as highly expressive; however, he and the stay-at-home mother were expected to carry out a comparable number of nurturing behaviors.

The evaluation of the parents working part-time was quite interesting. It appeared that mothers who are employed part-time were viewed as mothers who work and fathers employed part-time were viewed as fathers who do not work. Results indicate that women employed part-time are viewed as lacking in nurturing characteristics. Women working part-time still may be seen as breaking traditional expectations and thus are viewed similarly to that of the mother working full-time. The father working part-time was viewed as excessively expressive (even more so than the stay-at-home mother and father). Perhaps these fathers employed part-time are viewed not just as men who do not work but as men who cannot work full-time because they are deficient in skills or lacking ambition. Even though the father employed part-time was viewed as far more expressive than the mother employed part-time, he was expected to perform far fewer nurturing or expressive behaviors.

The authors conclude that, despite the fact that women make up half of the U.S. workforce, working mothers are still seen as non-traditional and are subject to

negative stigma. Both societal and economic forces compel women to break from traditional roles; however, there is no similar expectation of men. In fact, men who take non-traditional roles also are subject to negative stigma, so there is little social incentive for men to share in domestic or nurturing responsibilities. In fact, when comparing mothers and fathers occupying the same social role, evidence shows that all the mothers were expected to carry out the majority of day-to-day domestic responsibilities, regardless of which role they occupy.

An important limitation of the perception research presented to this point is that most of the respondents were White, middle class men and women. Therefore, the results are not generalizable beyond this population. In addition, in most cases, the perceptions were made by college students. Older adults and those with more career and parenting experience may hold different perceptions. These differences would be interesting to explore.

Brescoll and Uhlmann (2005) built upon and expanded the previous perception research in a number of ways. First, Brescoll and Uhlmann recruited a racially diverse adult sample rather than college students. In addition, they examined affective reactions to mothers and fathers who occupy traditional and nontraditional roles and did not simply identify stereotyped beliefs. The authors also focused on stay-at-home fathers where much of previous research has ignored this particular social role for men. This was chosen because the researchers believe that the stigma against stay-at-home fathers contributes to some fathers' unwillingness to stay home full-time. In addition, Brescoll and Uhlmann examined not only people's personal reactions to traditional and nontraditional parents but also assessed their beliefs about

how most other people (or culture/society) regard such individuals. The sample was recruited at a public park in Connecticut. Participants were largely middle class and 77% of the sample was European American and the remaining 23% were African American, Asian and Hispanic.

Results suggested that people hold more negative attitudes toward nontraditional parents than toward traditional parents. Stay-at-home mothers and employed fathers were evaluated more positively than stay-at-home fathers and employed mothers. Item analysis produced results indicating that participants viewed the stay-at-home father most negatively and perceived him to be the worst parent. Employed mothers were seen as more selfish than stay-at-home mothers, employed fathers, and stay-at-home fathers. Perceived social regard was lowest for stay-at-home fathers. Despite evaluating employed mothers negatively, participants felt that other people would respect employed mothers and perceive them as successful. Stay-at-home fathers appeared to be neither liked nor respected. The authors assert that this social stigma is likely to make fathers reluctant to assume a homemaker role, and, in turn, limits mothers' employment opportunities and serves as an important barrier to gender equality both in the home and in the workplace. Perhaps not surprisingly, the negative perceptions of men in nontraditional roles also have a significant impact on marital equality.

### *Marital Equality*

These negative perceptions hinder marital equality. There is little incentive for men to participate fully and equally in their marriages. With the rise of dual-earner families, marital equality has become a subject of scientific inquiry. In addition,

researchers have been intrigued by the fact that although the number of women and men who claim to endorse egalitarian relationships has increased steadily over the last several decades, inequality persists as the norm in marital relationships (Rosenbluth, Steil & Whitcomb, 1998). This dichotomy has inspired many scholars to investigate heterosexual marriage and identify characteristics of marital equality.

Rosenbluth, Steil and Whitcomb (1998) conducted 41 structured interviews with respondents in dual-career marriages and explored the following questions: What is the definition of marital equality? What are the criteria used to evaluate marital equality? To what extent do couples endorse marital equality as the ideal? Finally respondents were asked, what are the advantages and disadvantages of marital equality?

The findings suggested that marriages were considered equal when domestic tasks and responsibilities were shared by both partners. Shared decision-making also was used by the respondents to evaluate marriage equality. In addition, feelings of mutual respect, supportiveness, commitment and reciprocity over time created the perception of equality. An attitude of reciprocity was considered more important than task division or decision-making behavior. Men and women were equally likely to endorse relationship quality as ideal. Finally, the majority stated that equal relationships benefit both husbands and wives, but a minority did emphasize the costs to men and the benefits to women.

Many studies have focused on families where both partners have an ideological commitment to egalitarian marriage. Blaisure and Allen (1995) studied 10 heterosexual, White families where both partners self-identified as feminists.

However, although egalitarianism was an ideal, the researchers found it was not always achieved in daily family life. Nonetheless, the authors assert that feminist ideology upgrades marriage for women. “Wives and husbands who claim a feminist identity strive to enact their beliefs of equality through practices of vigilance, sometimes resulting in a mutual sharing of the second shift work” (Blaisure & Allen, 1995, p. 16). Equality is only possible if men are committed to a process of marital vigilance and to a guiding ideology of equality. Vigilance was defined by the couples as an attending to and a monitoring of equality within and outside of their relationship.

Blaisure and Allen identified five specific processes of vigilance that supported women and upgraded marriages: Critique of Gender Injustices, which refers to partners’ active and routine critique of sexism, gender stereotypes and gendered expectations; Public Acts of Equality, referring to any public demonstration of wives’ equal status in the marriage (i.e., different last names); Support of Wives Activities; Reflective Assessment, which indicates an ongoing monitoring of one’s contribution to the relationship and family life; and Emotional Involvement, which describes the importance of communicating emotions verbally and not withdrawing from conflict – the desire to meet each other’s emotional needs.

Zimmerman, Haddock, Current and Ziemba (2003) examined how couples that practice marital partnership and equality successfully balance family and work. These researchers believed that the way in which couples divide responsibility for major areas of life is vital in understanding the adaptive strategies for balancing family and work. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods in

addressing how the couples practice their philosophy of marital equality. Forty-seven couples participated in the study. The majority of the sample was White, middle class and highly educated. Participant couples were considered eligible if (a) they were married; (b) each spouse completed at least 35 hours per week of paid employment; (c) the couple had at least one child 12 years of age or younger who resided with them at least half of the time, and (d) both partners wanted to participate in the study. In addition, to be eligible, couples had to agree with five statements that defined “success” in balancing family and work, such as “my spouse and I believe that we are skilled in balancing the many responsibilities in our lives.”

Participant couples completed a questionnaire and an approximately 90-minute, conjoint interview, which typically was conducted in their homes. The semi-structured interview included open-ended questions regarding strategies that have contributed to the couple’s overall success. The majority of these couples stated that striving for marital equality is an integral strategy to their success. The participant couples described six general partnership themes that supported effective work-family balance: shared housework, mutual and active involvement in childcare, joint decision-making, equal access to and influence over finances, value placed on both partners’ work/life goals, and shared emotion work. Both quantitative and qualitative data indicated that these successful couples equally share housework and emotion work. Wives did tend to perform slightly more childcare and to be primarily responsible for “organizing” family life. Wives perceive that husbands’ careers are slightly more prioritized.

Knudson-Martin and Mahoney (2005), observing that equality is related to relationship success yet few couples actually achieve it, conducted a qualitative analysis with the goal of gaining insight into the processes through which couples build marital equality – relationships based on different assumptions than traditional gender roles. These researchers shift from the thinking that marital equality is an all-or-nothing phenomenon and focuses attention on how couples move toward greater relationship quality. The authors assert that as women and men pull back from a gendered family organization, they need to overcome the invisible and latent power assumptions that still place the bulk of family responsibilities on women and undermine their power in relationships.

The qualitative interviews utilized in this study were gathered from two separate couple cohorts: one from 2001 and the other from 1982. Participants were long-term couples with children who self-identified as egalitarian. The 1982 sample included a predominantly White, middle-class, well-educated East-coast population. The sample in 2001 was more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity.

The authors defined equality in four ways: Partners hold equal status; accommodation in the relationship is mutual; attention to the other in the relationship is mutual; and there is a mutual sense of well-being of the partners (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 1996, 1998). The researchers were interested in the processes that facilitated this marital equality. The interview data suggested that those who seek out marital equality tend to have at least one of the following characteristics: They express awareness about gender issues, hold dual commitments to both work and family or feel situational pressures that are not well-served by old gender patterns.

When at least one partner expresses a desire to strive for marital equality, four patterns seem particularly salient to the change process itself: *Active negotiation about family life* – Movement toward equality requires facing conflict and working to resolve issues, rather than letting them fester; *Challenging gender entitlement* – “Gendered behavior is kept in place in part by the latent and invisible power that accrues to men in society based on gender hierarchy. This is hard to identify and address. Challenges to gender entitlement are usually instigated by women” (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005, p.243). The men in the study reported that once they became conscious of their gender entitlement, they consciously worked at remaining aware; *Development of new competencies* – As partners move towards marital equality, they have to acquire new competencies for which they have not been socialized and go beyond the qualities by which men and women have been evaluated in the past; *Mutual attention to relationship and family tasks* – Movement toward equality is reinforced when both partners consistently pay attention to their relationship. Couples who achieve some form of marital equality reported that they consciously attempt to be sensitive to their partner’s physical and emotional states and provide emotional and other supports. This includes ensuring that each partner also is finding time for him- or herself to relax and enjoy personal time.

One limitation pertinent to all of the marital equality research presented here is the samples were made up of predominantly White, middle class, highly educated individuals and couples. The couples included in much of this research also enjoyed flexibility at work and the support of supervisors and co-workers in their efforts to balance family and work. Therefore, the data regarding the frequency with which

couples are able to achieve equality and the specific processes toward equality that were identified cannot be generalized to all marital relationships.

### *Predictors of Paternal Involvement in the Family*

From the research reviewed thus far it seems clear that paternal involvement in the family is a vital component in marital equality and for gender equality more generally. Full family involvement is a nontraditional role for fathers; therefore, men lack socialization in this role and are subject to a negative social stigma when engaging in domestic roles and responsibilities. Understanding what motivates paternal involvement is crucial when attempting to counter entrenched socially constructed beliefs about fatherhood.

Jacobs and Kelley (2006) sought to understand the predictors of father involvement in the family. The study expands earlier works of Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine (1987) who specified four categories of influence that shape father involvement: motivation to be involved in their children's lives; skills and self-confidence in the fathering role; social support and stresses; and institutional factors such as job characteristics. Jacobs and Kelley (2006) examined these categories of influence and related them to three aspects of father involvement also described by Lamb and colleagues (1987): engagement, accessibility, and responsibility, as well as the percentage of time men spent as their children's primary caregiver.

Participants were 119 dual-earner couples who lived with a biological child between the ages of one and four. All parents were employed outside the home. Mothers and fathers independently completed questionnaires that assessed the degree to which fathers are involved in the care of their young children, parental beliefs

about fathering, career saliency, marital satisfaction, work-family conflict, parenting self-efficacy and parenting satisfaction.

Motivation was assessed in two ways: 1) by examining participant's views of traditional to nontraditional gender roles for parents and 2) through measuring career saliency (researchers hypothesized that fathers who are less emotionally attached to their jobs may spend more time with their children). Results indicated a consistent positive relationship between nontraditional beliefs about fathering and each aspect of father involvement measured: engagement, accessibility, responsibility, and time as the child's primary caregiver. More nontraditional beliefs about the father's role predicted more time as the child's primary caregiver. Mothers' beliefs about parental roles had no relationship to paternal involvement. The correlational data make it impossible to suggest any causal relationships: it is possible that those fathers who hold less traditional views are more involved in the family; it is equally possible that fathers' beliefs about fathering become more liberal as fathers become more involved with their children. It is impossible to determine the true motivator for spending more time with children.

Results also indicated that men's parenting self-efficacy was correlated with all types of father involvement studied. Therefore, high parenting self-efficacy predicted more responsiveness among fathers. What seems to be missing in this analysis is: what are the predictors of paternal parenting self-efficacy? It seems obvious that higher parenting self-efficacy would predict higher parental involvement. More interesting would be the understanding of the contributors to parenting self-efficacy.

In order to examine the relationship between social support and father involvement, participants completed a scale measuring work-family conflict. Men's work-family conflict was not found to be associated with paternal involvement. Institutional factors were assessed by examining the number of hours worked outside the home. The greater number of hours men worked outside the home, the less responsibility fathers took for childcare. The more hours mothers worked outside the home, the more accessible fathers were to their children. It is interesting to note that the only variable reported by mothers that contributed to father involvement in the analysis was the number of hours she worked outside the home. These results indicate the importance of structural variables in the outcome of father involvement; however, they do not indicate the preference, motivation, or reason for these structural realities.

One main limitation of this study was that it examined only temporal aspects of father involvement. A broader, more diverse analysis of the aspects of paternal involvement is necessary. The factors examined by Jacobs and Kelley (2006) that related to father involvement were primarily structural and behavioral variables. It was impossible to determine the reasons or motivations behind the structural conditions that seemed to be predict father involvement. Did fathers prefer these life structures or were they determined by factors outside the father's control? In addition, because of the correlational nature of this quantitative methodology, causation between variables was impossible to determine, which leaves many questions unanswered. In addition, because quantitative methodology relies on existing scales, it can be hard to find measures that effectively tap the constructs of interest. In this

study, a number of the measures missed the depth of the constructs which the researchers claimed to be examining.

Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006) asserted that fatherhood is a socially constructed notion. It is a concept that is created from the socio-political power structures that underlie society. Though research shows that fathers are more involved with their children than previous generations, the majority of couples, even self-described egalitarian couples, revert to a stereotyped division of labor after the birth of their children (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005). Heterosexual marriage remains embedded within a social system where gender is the determinant of the allocation of rights, power, and responsibility.

Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006) contend that the gendered-division of labor in families does frequently leave fathers in a peripheral position. However, they cite literature on fathers that suggests that men do have the capacity to be relational, and when they do assume a nurturing role, they are positively changed by their experiences (Kimmel, 2004). Matta and Knudson-Martin assert that what is needed is an examination of how mothers and fathers together define and create fatherhood in the context of their families. In their study, they hoped to address the need to learn more about the relationship processes that construct fatherhood.

Participants for the study were selected from a bank of interviews of husbands and wives previously collected in 2000-2003 from a larger Contemporary Couples study (CCS). A total of 90 CCS interviews were available. The researchers reviewed the CCS interviews for participant diversity (i.e., ethnicity, employment, education level) and range of fathering experience. When new interviews did not expand sample

diversity or provide new information (i.e., saturation developed), they were not included in the study. The final sample consisted of 40 interviews.

To be included in the study, couples needed to have children 5 years old or younger. The couples were recruited through snowball sampling. Researchers located their initial couples and asked them for a referral for other couples who met the same criteria. The sample of couples was racially and ethnically diverse. The majority of the couples lived in Southern California and included a wide range of educational, occupational, and religious backgrounds. Couples were interviewed together. Each interview was based on a general interview guide addressing how couples organize their lives, make decisions, and relate to one another.

Results indicated that while most mothers were readily engaged in child care, most fathers were only peripherally engaged with the care of their children. How fathers responded to their children often was dependent on the spousal relationship, and the degree of response to the children varied considerably. The authors used the concept “father responsivity” to represent this variation. Responsivity refers to the degree to which fathers recognize and attend to the needs of their wives and children. It includes attention to their emotional needs, household and child-care tasks, and power and fairness within the couple relationship. Responsivity was grouped into three levels to “facilitate analysis” (Matta & Knudson-Martin, p. 26): Low, moderate and high. The authors assert that their findings illuminate the “processes through which political and economic processes intersect within intimate relationships to determine how fathers respond to their children’s needs” (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006, p.31). They believe that the results identify father responsivity as the key

relational process through which changing societal notions of gender, work, and fatherhood play out within families.

In addition, the authors conclude by suggesting that these results clarify conditions that support development of father responsibility. These five conditions that help men engage with their children are the following: 1) egalitarian gender ideology; 2) valuation of women's work; 3) perceptions of choice; 4) equal power and indebtedness and 5) men's emotional attunement.

One of the strengths of this study was that the researchers sought a diverse sample. However, specific demographics (as far as numbers) were not given. A table was presented that was entitled, "key demographic characteristics;" however, the table was difficult to decipher because it appeared to combine all non-Caucasians into "minority status" and included Eastern Europeans as non-Caucasian. Therefore, it was difficult to determine exactly the racial and ethnic make-up of the sample. In addition, socioeconomic status was not included in this "key demographic characteristics" table; as SES seems to be a significant demographic when considering marital equality and egalitarian relationships generally, it was a serious omission.

The one methodological flaw that seems very significant is that the researchers did not collect their own data for this project. The interviews were conducted years before and a general interview protocol for couples was utilized. Therefore, the researchers were unable to tailor the interview to address the research questions that were the supposed focus of the article. Interview questions specifically addressing how couples co-construct "fatherhood" could have provided far more

depth in understanding the phenomenon. Also, because they used archival data, the researchers were unable to look more closely at social contextual factors or how couples in different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups may construct their relationships differently.

The results were broad and did not address the research questions regarding the processes involved in the co-construction of fatherhood and *how* couples co-construct the meaning of fatherhood. In fact, the results were similar to those found in a general study of couples. The authors did create terms and concepts to describe their construct of fatherhood, but the research findings were not original or enlightening. For example, when using a three level model of responsivity, from low to moderate to high, it was predictable that most of the participants would fall in the “moderate” category. Responsivity is a continuous variable that seems to lose effect when reduced to three levels.

### *The Feminist Meaning of “Power”*

For many contemporary feminist theorists, power is one of the keys to understanding gender relations (Anselmi & Law, 1998). If power is defined as the asymmetrical control over distribution of resources, over decision making, or over another person’s outcomes, then men in U.S. society typically enjoy more power than women. Men control a disproportionate share of outcomes that are valued in society; therefore, they are awarded more opportunities to contribute, to receive deference, and to advance in the workplace (Fiske & Stevens, 1998). In this perspective, gendered relationships are often asymmetrical, with females relatively powerless and devalued within our society.

As noted by Enns (1997), “the average man has historically held higher levels of reward, coercive, referent, expert, legitimate, and informational power than women” (p. 156). Men have benefited subconsciously and relied on the social power that has been bestowed upon them. The strength of gender socialization makes this conferring of power seem like a natural or automatic process for men in society. Therefore, as women seek increasing levels of equality, men must learn to share some of the power to which they historically have felt entitled (Enns, 1997). It is through this lens that the men examined in the current project were identified as “power-sharing.”

#### *Qualitative Approach to Examining Men in Power Sharing Relationships*

The body of empirical work related to men’s engagement in role or power sharing relationships is fairly limited. There is a growing interest in men and fatherhood with the increase in dual-income families. However, much of this research has been quantitative in nature and has focused almost solely on easily measured structural and behavioral variables related to housework and childcare (i.e., Coltrane & Adams, 2001; Jacobs & Kelley, 2006; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov & Levine, 1987). The quantitative analyses seem to predict and exhibit obvious social trends. For example, it seems logical that as mothers’ work hours increase, fathers’ time with children should increase. However, this structural situation says nothing about partners’ motivations, preferences, or control over the situation. Without this information, the picture remains unclear. Missing in the literature are factors that facilitate a man’s desire to engage in a relationship where roles and power are shared with his wife. The fairly complex but interesting question is: what are the attitudes, beliefs and feelings

that motivate and encourage fathers to seek out relationships where power and roles are shared? There is a lack of current theory to guide the examination of this particular question and current literature lacks adequate measurement tools to develop novel theory.

Complex questions can be difficult to examine with quantitative analysis for a number of reasons, one of which is the limitation related to measurement. Qualitative methodology, on the other hand, does not rely on existing measurement tools and can be effective in uncovering hidden meaning. Instead of scales, instruments, and other measurement tools, qualitative methodology depends on a reciprocal connection between participant and researcher (Fassinger, 2005; Ponterotto, 2005). Deep meaning can be brought to the surface through a participant's reflection, and this reflection is stimulated by the interactive researcher-participant dialogue. Qualitative methodology can be particularly useful in describing the experiences of understudied populations or phenomenon where preexisting theory and/or measures may be inadequate. Qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Grounded Theory is a qualitative approach that frequently has been utilized when exploring and explicating previously untapped phenomenon. The "ultimate aim is to produce innovative theory that is 'grounded' in data collected from participants on the basis of the complexities of their lived experiences in a social context" (Fassinger, 2005, p. 157). For the purposes of this study, a grounded theory method of

analysis was utilized in the pursuit of insight and understanding related to the attitudes and experiences of power-sharing fathers.

### *Summary and Statement of the Problem*

Despite the increasing presence of the dual-earner family and the benefits of multiple roles, challenges to this lifestyle continue to persist. Resilient gender stereotypes and entrenched socially constructed roles for men and women result in gendered expectations that make it difficult for men and women to break free from social tradition. Therefore, employed mothers continue to assume primary responsibility for the care of the children and the household labor (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer & Robinson, 2000; Ozer, 1995). Mothers have invested more time and energy in the work force; however, fathers' have not matched investment by participating in family caregiving and household management.

There seems to be an obvious imbalance in the dual-earner American family. Mothers are entering the workforce in record numbers and are significant contributors to the family income. Evidence suggests that the multiple role management is healthy for both men and women, and equitable marriages are shown to have greater relationship stability. However, mothers continue to be expected to carry out the vast majority of household tasks. Employed mothers work outside the home, contribute to the family finances, and continue to be the primary caregiver to the children and the manager of the household. Mothers have expanded their roles; however, fathers' role expansion is lagging. For equality to be a reality, both men and women must be encouraged to consider non-traditional options and must be supported when they do.

There are men who do participate in role/power-sharing marriages. The present study examined the lives of these men. The goal of this study was to develop a framework for understanding the facilitators that encourage men to engage in power sharing marital relationships, where partners hold mutual status, actively negotiate roles, share decision-making and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks. With the increasing number of dual-earner families in the U.S., it seems critical that men be empowered to broaden their traditional roles, negotiate and share power, and participate more fully in household responsibilities.

The literature examining men in this power-sharing role is extremely limited. In addition, the related research that exists has been quantitative in nature and has been limited by the lack of adequate measures for the appropriate constructs. Strauss and Corbin (1998) noted that qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind a phenomenon about which little is known and can provide details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with conventional quantitative methods. Grounded theory was selected as the specific qualitative method to be utilized in this study because it allows researchers to “aptly name categories, ask stimulating questions, make comparisons, and extract an innovative, integrated, realistic scheme” from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 13). The end goal of grounded theory is the creation of a novel theory. Grounded theory was used in this study to aid in the development of a theory that promotes the understanding of the facilitators that encourage men to engage in power-sharing marital relationships.

### *Research Questions*

As Strauss and Corbin (1998) emphasize, the main purpose of grounded theory is to develop innovative theory. To do this, it is necessary to frame research question in a way that will allow for the flexibility and freedom to explore the phenomenon in depth (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore, the research questions should be sufficiently broad and open so that discovery of new concepts is not limited. However, the research questions should not be so broad as to allow for the entire universe of possibilities (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These guidelines were followed in the development of the following research questions.

*Research Question 1:* Does the study's definition of a power-sharing man capture the reality of the lived experience?

*Research Question 2:* How do power-sharing men view their relationships with their partners and their children?

*Research Question 2a:* How do these men believe their marital relationships compare to those of their peers?

*Research Question 3:* What are the internal facilitators of a men's engagement in a power-sharing relationship?

*Research Question 3a:* What are the values, attitudes, and feelings that contribute to a man's engagement in this type of relationship?

*Research Question 4:* How did these facilitators develop?

*Research Question 5:* What are some external factors that facilitate a man's engagement in a power-sharing relationship?

*Research Question 6:* What are the obstacles or barriers power-sharing men have encountered in committing to this type of relationship?

### Chapter 3: Methods

#### *Paradigm Underpinning the Research*

The social constructionist paradigm was foundational to this research endeavor. Social constructionists maintain that there is no objective reality because reality is constructed as the result of human and social interaction (Ore, 2006). Reality cannot be partitioned out from social experiences (Ponterotto, 2005). Morrow and Smith (2000) explain, “individual meanings, and therefore, ‘realities’ are particular to individuals but may be shared among individuals, that is, constructed within a social context” (p. 202). Social constructionists acknowledge the powerful influence of the social environment and the ways in which social context may participate in the construction of meaning. Meaning is often buried or obscured and can be brought to the surface through deep reflection facilitated by a researcher-participant interaction (Ponterotto, 2005).

The social constructionist perspective is compatible with this researcher’s personal philosophical stance. The goal of this research was to understand how male participants construct meaning of their lived experiences as power-sharing fathers and husbands. This meaning and the influence of social context may be hidden. Therefore, the hope was that the researcher-participant interaction would tap into deeply ingrained ideals that would help illuminate what motivates men to engage in power-sharing marriages.

From the constructionist perspective, qualitative research methodology is uniquely effective in uncovering meaning. Grounded theory was chosen for the research design because its goal is to identify, develop, and relate concepts that are

the building blocks of theory (Fassinger, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theory development was important in achieving the purpose of the study because the primary goal was to identify a novel framework for understanding the influences and motivations that encourage men to engage in power sharing marital relationships. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with men who are engaged in power-sharing marital relationships. Data were reviewed as they were collected and were analyzed for emergent themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Finally, it is important to note that this researcher does not presume that the meaning of the data exists independent of her own personal experiences (Charmaz, 2000). As a feminist scholar, the researcher has struggled with gender issues in her own marriage, family, and work life. These perspectives and experiences cannot be separated from the results of the study. At the same time, the researcher was vigilant in self-reflection, worked with a research team in order to gain multiple perspectives, and sought out colleagues and other professionals to audit the data analysis and research process. The researcher sought to understand the unique experiences and explanations of the participants with as much sensitivity to their individual perspectives as was possible.

### *Participants*

Participants for a qualitative study are “not selected because they fulfill the representative requirements of statistical inference but because they can provide substantial contributions to filling out the structure and character of the experience under investigation” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 139). For this study, the experiences of a specific population of men were under investigation. Therefore, purposive selection

was employed. Merriam (2002) advises, “since you are not interested in ‘how much’ or ‘how often,’ random sampling makes little sense. Instead, since qualitative inquiry seeks to understand the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants, it is important to select a sample from which most can be learned” (p. 12). The participants included thirteen men who self-identified as power-sharing and whose answers to a screening instrument designed for this study were deemed acceptable by the primary researcher. Participants were recruited and interview data were collected until redundancy of the data was achieved. The interview data were consistently compared throughout the process, and participants were recruited until common themes were revealed and patterns in experiences were observed. As Strauss and Glaser (1998) suggest, new data should be collected until the new sources repeat what has been previously learned and no longer deepen the findings. They termed this process “theoretical sampling.”

The goal was to recruit as racially diverse a sample of men as possible for this study. Per theoretical sampling, participants were recruited and data collected until some diversity was represented in the sample. Ultimately, three men of color were recruited and participated in this study. As predicted, the sample consisted of men who have a high level of education and who are middle (to upper-middle) class. Although this could be seen as a limitation, the researcher believes it actually adds value. These men have chosen this path; they could have followed a traditional path and chose not to. Working class families typically cannot afford to have one parent home full-time and often cannot afford day care. In these frequent cases, the families become alternating-shift parents, where fathers share roles and care for children out

of necessity (Deutsch, 2001). There is rich information to gather from men who are actively choosing this role despite other alternatives. The data may be more compelling when the power-sharing is by choice not based on structural demands or needs.

Specific criteria were used to locate men meeting the study's parameters. The broad criterion was that participants needed to be currently engaged in a power-sharing marriage. The definition of power-sharing and the related criteria were generated based on the marital equality research reviewed in the preceding chapter (Blaisure & Allen, 1995; Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005; Rosenbluth, Steil & Whitcomb (1998); Zimmerman, Haddock, Current & Ziemba, 2003). The broad definition of power-sharing marriage used here is: Marriages where partners hold mutual status, actively negotiate roles, share decision-making, and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks. Based on the selection methods and requirements used by Haddock and Rattenborg (2003), to be eligible, participants needed to agree with the following six statements: 1) My partner (spouse) and I share child care and household tasks; 2) My partner and I do not consciously divide roles or tasks based on gender; 3) My partner and I both have access to and influence over family finances; 4) My partner and I both freely express our opinions and needs when negotiating family decisions; 5) My partner and I mutually respect and value each other's professional pursuits; 6) Neither my partner nor I describe our familial identity as "head of the household."

In addition, because the investigator was drawn to this research because of the belief that power-sharing men are essential to gender equality and to the emancipation

of mothers, only fathers in heterosexual partnerships (marriages) were recruited. The goal was to interview men in committed, long-term relationships where role management and negotiation inevitably has been encountered. Therefore, participants were men who have been in their current marriage for a minimum of five years. In addition, the literature indicates that the division of household labor and family care is most intense and complicated when young children are present in the home (Kessler & McRae, 1982). Therefore, participants all had children ten years old or younger living with them full time in the home. Finally, to be eligible for the study, both participants and their partners needed to be employed outside the home a minimum of twenty hours per week.

### *Procedure*

Snowball sampling techniques were utilized in recruiting participants. Flyers outlining eligibility requirements were distributed via three community and synagogue e-mail list serves and were distributed in hard copy to one local preschool (see Appendix A for recruitment materials). Flyer recipients were asked to participate in the study if eligible or to forward the information along to individuals who they believed would meet recruitment criteria. One of the e-mail list-serves was a community moms' list-serve. In this case, moms were asked to nominate their partners or to forward the announcement along. The majority of participants were recruited from the moms' list-serve, where wives often "nominated" their husbands for participation, and from the pre-school where hard copy flyers were distributed.

Flyers and e-mail announcements included the researcher's contact information. Potential participants were encouraged to contact the researcher for more

detailed information about the research project if necessary. When a respondent was interested in participating, he contacted the researcher via e-mail or telephone, and for the majority of respondents, an initial phone interview was scheduled.

The response to the call for participants was larger and quicker than expected. A number of men responded to the recruitment materials even though they did not meet eligibility requirements. For example, two men were interested in participating who had children who were over the age of 10. In addition, another man responded who had not been married for the five years that was required by the research parameters. These men articulated that they knew they did not meet the criteria but wanted to express their interest in the study and share that, if criteria were expanded, they would like to participate. There were also three men who ultimately declined participation because they did not want to give up weekend hours for the in-person interview. These men expressed that their weekends were reserved for time with their family. The schedule for the interviews was not flexible; therefore, these men were not able to participate.

The phone interview served as an additional screening tool to ensure that the respondent did indeed fit criteria for power-sharing. The screening instrument was an informal tool designed by the researcher based on her own daily experiences managing graduate school, work, and family as well as her observations of diverse families with whom she has regular contact (see Appendix B for phone screening instrument). The phone screening interview was conducted by the primary researcher and eligibility was determined at the end of this interview by the primary researcher. If the potential participant easily shared examples of how his marriage fit the

research's definition of power-sharing, and if he conveyed involvement in, attention to and knowledge of his family's routine and interests, he was deemed eligible. Only one potential participant was determined to be ineligible based on the phone screen. This participant expressed that he did not feel as though his wife shared power with him. He articulated that he often felt powerless in his marriage and as if he was the one responsible for all the household responsibilities. The primary researcher made the decision that this particular marriage, as described by the respondent, did not fit the definition derived for this study; therefore, this participant was ineligible.

After eligibility was confirmed through the phone screening, the participant was provided (via e-mail or regular mail) with a detailed informed consent form (see Appendix C) that outlined his rights and roles in the research as well as the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). The participant was asked to review the consent form prior to the interview and to complete the demographic questionnaire. The final consent form was signed at the time of the interview.

Data were gathered through an in-person, face-to-face, semi-structured interview. The interview was guided by a set of interview questions or interview protocol (see Appendix E for interview protocol). The protocol was designed to address the research questions outlined earlier and was developed using knowledge gained from the literatures on marital equality (Blaisure & Allen, 1995; Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005; Rosenbluth, Steil & Whitcomb, 1998; Zimmerman, Haddock, Current & Ziemba, 2003) and paternal involvement in families (Coltrane & Adams, 2001; Jacobs & Kelley, 2006; Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2005; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov & Levine, 1987), as well as the

experiences of the researcher and her peers. The interviews were conversational in nature where prompts came naturally and participants were able “to tell their stories largely in their own words” (Fassinger, 2005, p. 158).

Pilot interviews were conducted with two friends/acquaintances of the researcher who met the criteria for inclusion in the project. Pilot interviews served to assess the effectiveness of the interview protocol and helped determine if modifications were necessary. The researcher found the two pilot interviews sufficiently helpful in finalizing the interview protocol. No significant modifications were made to the protocol; however, the pilot interviews helped the interviewer become comfortable with the interview process and familiar with the research questions. In addition, the pilot interviews were valuable in helping the researcher find the words and sentences needed to transition smoothly from one topic area to another without confusing the participant.

All interviews were conducted by the primary investigator to ensure consistency in the interview format and interviewer style. In addition, as an advanced graduate student in counseling psychology, the researcher possessed clinical skills that proved beneficial when conducting the type of semi-structured interviews involved in this study.

Since the primary researcher was a woman, a discussion of the researcher’s effectiveness in conducting interviews with an all-male sample is warranted. As an advanced graduate student in counseling psychology, the researcher has had considerable clinical experience establishing rapport and gaining trust of male clients. Prior to developing this study, the researcher also consulted the literature on cross-

gender counseling (relating the qualitative interview to a therapy session). The literature suggests that male clients often seek out female therapists (Carlson, 1987; Johnson, 2005). Carlson (1987) suggests that therapy may be uncomfortable for men because of its inherent intimacy and expectation for the expression of vulnerability and emotion. Men may fear humiliation and rejection from a male therapist where they feel greater emotional safety with a woman (Carlson, 1987). Since men in this study were asked to express and share personal and emotional information, it seemed to be to the researcher's advantage that she was a woman. Overall, the literature was interpreted to be favorable toward the idea of the primary researcher conducting the research interviews. The interviews were not judged by an outside source; however, the researcher's observation was that the male participants did engage easily and quickly in the interview process. In addition, the majority of the participants reported at the end of the interview that they found the interview interesting, and that they enjoyed examining their relationships in a complex way.

At the scheduled interview, the researcher began by answering any questions the participant had regarding the informed consent form, reviewing confidentiality procedures, and securing permission to audiotape the interview. The participant then signed the informed consent form and submitted the completed demographic questionnaire. Interviews were audiotaped to ensure accuracy in recording participants' responses. The interviews ranged in length from 41-72 minutes. The settings for the interviews included any mutually agreed upon public place. The study's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for use of human subjects dictated that interviews must be conducted in a public domain, rather than in a personal home.

The primary criterion for the setting was that it be as quiet a public location as possible and convenient for both the researcher and participant. A quiet setting was desirable because each interview was audiotaped for future transcription. The initial transcription was completed by paid transcription professionals. The transcripts and corresponding audio were reviewed, edited, and cleaned by the researcher and her team of undergraduate research assistants. A confidentiality agreement was signed by all who had access to the audiotaped interviews.

To protect confidentiality, the researcher asked each participant, prior to beginning the audiotape, to refrain from using any specific identifying information (name, address, place of employment, etc...) during the interview. The participants were easily able to follow this directive and no identifiable information was captured on audiotape. Demographic information was gathered on a brief form (see above). The audiotape and the demographic questionnaire were assigned a corresponding random number. Audiotapes and transcripts were identified by the assigned number throughout the course of the project. Only the primary researcher knew the identity of the participants.

At the end of each interview, the participant was provided again with the researcher's contact information and encouraged to contact her if they remembered or wanted to contribute any additional information pertinent to the research project. Only one participant did follow up with the researcher with additional information, and it was incorporated into the research data and analyzed along with the original data. In addition, participants were informed that they may be re-contacted if any clarification was necessary; however, no participants needed to be re-contacted for

clarification. After receiving permission from participants, the researcher mailed the final transcript of the interview to each participant, so he would have the opportunity to review, to add to and/or to amend the transcript. This endeavor did not yield any additional analyzable information.

A field notes form (see Appendix F) was completed by the interviewer immediately following each interview. Field notes are a way of recording interviewer reactions and observations not captured by the audiotape. Included in the notes was documentation of the length of the interview, general themes that emerged, comments on the rapport between interviewer and participant, and other relevant information (e.g., interruptions, technical difficulties, tone of interview, and general attitude of participant). In most cases, the field notes also served as a place to record conceptual and procedural ideas. The field notes were entered into consideration during data analysis. In addition, the field notes, as they were utilized, also served as a medium for researcher reflexivity where reactions to the data, biases, and feelings could be documented and recorded. The field notes were entered into consideration during data analysis.

### *Analysis*

The interview data were analyzed following the grounded theory approach. Data were coded according to an “increasingly abstracted process aimed at the generation of a theoretical statement about the phenomenon under investigation” (Fassinger, 2005). Analysis proceeded through three types of coding: open, axial and selective. Although the coding will be discussed in a way that implies sequential

analysis, data were actually repeatedly and constantly compared to new and existing data; therefore, the stages of coding were truly concurrent (Fassinger, 2005).

The initial stages of data analysis were conducted by the primary researcher and a team of three undergraduate students recruited from the University of Maryland, College Park. Three of the researchers identified as White women (2 Jewish-American) and one researcher identified as Latina, ages were 38, 21, 20 and 20 years old respectively. The undergraduate team members were interested in gaining experience in social scientific research experience related to women and families and were recruited from upper-level psychology and family studies courses. Training of the research team included discussions of team members' personal attitudes and values related to the research topic; readings related to qualitative research and to the research project; and an intensive workshop on grounded theory facilitated by primary researcher. Team member biases were varied among team members and were discussed explicitly throughout the research process.

The team was helpful in expediting the transcription and coding process. However, more importantly, the team served an auditing function by checking and questioning each other's coding and categorizing of the data as well as the primary researcher's biases and expectations. The team met as a full group on a regular basis for five months. In addition, team members also worked independently on the coding of transcripts.

*Open coding.* During the first level of coding, transcribed data were broken down into meaningful concepts, labeled (using the participant's own words) and examined for alternative interpretations (Fassinger, 2005). The research team began

the open coding process by spending a lengthy research team meeting coding the first transcribed interview together. Each member independently read over the entire transcript and then went back over the transcript to generate concepts. Concepts varied in length but were often several lines or a short paragraph. The team reviewed together this initial transcript line-by-line and discussed the concepts each had generated. When there was disagreement about how a concept was derived or interpreted, the team discussed the issue until consensus could be reached.

Subsequently, the concepts were compared and those that shared conceptual meaning were grouped into categories. As each category emerged, it was explicated by using the key concepts that were subsumed within it. At the end of this team effort on the first transcript, the first iteration of a category list was created.

Each of the remaining 12 transcripts was then coded independently by two of the researchers. The researchers would confer, discuss discrepancies, and come to agreement. With each new transcript, there was the possibility of new categories emerging or the need to modify existing categories. Therefore, at each team meeting, new categories and modifications would be discussed and agreed upon. In addition, research team meetings were utilized to reconcile any differences that could not be resolved in the dyad. The team utilized debate and discussion to come to consensus. The categories underwent modification repeatedly to incorporate new information and were checked continually to make sure the categories continued to represent the data adequately. Since the created categories are expected to reflect concepts discussed by a majority of participants, categories that were found to be too narrow

were re-examined and subsumed into broader categories that reflected the concepts given by multiple participants. The master category list is presented in Appendix G.

*Axial coding.* After constant review and evaluation, the categories were ultimately grouped into larger, overarching categories, or key categories, that subsumed several of the pre-existing categories. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe this stage of axial coding as the stage when the researcher begins to fit the pieces of the data puzzle together. At this stage, relationships between categories were identified at the level of properties (attributes) and dimensions (ordering of properties along a continuum). The delineation of properties and dimensions allows the researcher to differentiate one category from another and better understand how each category best describes the narratives of the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain, “The qualifying of a category by specifying its particular properties and dimensions is important because we begin to formulate patterns along with their variations” (p. 177). Patterns are formed through the examination of properties and their related dimensions.

Eight key categories emerged from these data and unique properties and dimensions were generated and analyzed for each category. For example, within the key category “The Power-sharing relationship,” three properties were identified: 1) Participant’s view of power-sharing as a concept; 2) Participant’s view of power-sharing as ideology and 3) Participant’s comparison of their power-sharing relationship with peer relationships. To further illustrate this example, the property “Participant’s comparison of their power-sharing relationship with peer relationships” was dimensionalized on three continua: the first indicated the level of the

participant's involvement with his children when compared to his peers, the second captured the participant's perception of how similar or different his marriage was in relation to his peers and the third explicated the difference in the participant's comparison with his close friends or colleagues versus that of the "average" man. Each participant's responses were plotted on the created continua to represent his position in relation to each anchor and to other participants.

In a few instances, dimensionalization was difficult or ineffective because the identified properties did not lend themselves to evaluation on a continuum. In these instances, participants' responses were synthesized thematically and are listed and described in this document.

Constant comparison was done at this stage to ensure accurate representation and comprehension of the data: 1) Categories were compared with key categories; 2) Key categories were compared repeatedly to the entire data-set, not just the data within that category; 3) The properties and dimensions of categories were analyzed, interpreted, and constantly compared to the interview data; and 4) Variations in the data were explored, with special attention to disconfirming or non-normative data, and categories were reconceptualized if necessary.

*Selective coding.* In this stage of analysis, the relationship between categories was examined. Categories were integrated and refined to formulate a core story or emergent theory. This emergent theory describes the most important aspects of the data, utilizing the examination of the propertizing and dimensionalizing, and articulates the relationship between categories. The emerging theory was compared with each participant's original narrative to make sure the theory fully represents the

data. It was at this stage when the eight key categories were subsumed under four key constructs that explain the emergent theory. In addition to the four main constructs proposed in the emerging theory is a separate construct that includes the definition of power-sharing as a concept. See Table 1 for the how the key categories and initial categories were grouped into the four key constructs.

Table 1

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Key Categories</b>	<b>Categories</b>
Power-Sharing Defined	Power-Sharing relationship	Power-sharing concept, Power-sharing realities, Comparison with other families, Comparison with other fathers, Power-sharing as ideology, Relationship with partner, Relationship with children.
Pre-Marital Influences	Influences Related to Power-Sharing, Family of Origin	Pre-marital influences, Father relationship history, social circle, Family of origin – mother, Family of origin – father, General description of family of origin
Values	Values as Motivators	Self-motivators, Beliefs as motivators
Power-Sharing Initiation	Power-Sharing Decision-Making and timing, Partner Characteristics	Timing of power-sharing engagement, Partner characteristics
Challenges and Facilitators	Challenges, Facilitators	Internal struggles, External facilitators, External barriers, Power-sharing trade-off, Power-sharing difficulties.

Four auditors were solicited to review and check the veracity and accuracy of the analyses. Two of the auditors were counseling psychologists familiar with grounded theory methodology. Each of these auditors reviewed the process from concept and category generation to the propertizing and dimensionalizing of key categories. Two additional auditors, professionals unaffiliated with counseling

psychology and unfamiliar with grounded theory methodology, reviewed the interview data, subsequent analysis and theory development to ensure that the results accurately represented the spoken words of the participants. The perspectives of each auditor were aimed at minimizing the bias of the primary researcher, ensuring thorough evaluation of the data, and helping to structure the written discussion in a way that accurately represented the interviewee's lived experience.

## Chapter 4: Results

### *Overview*

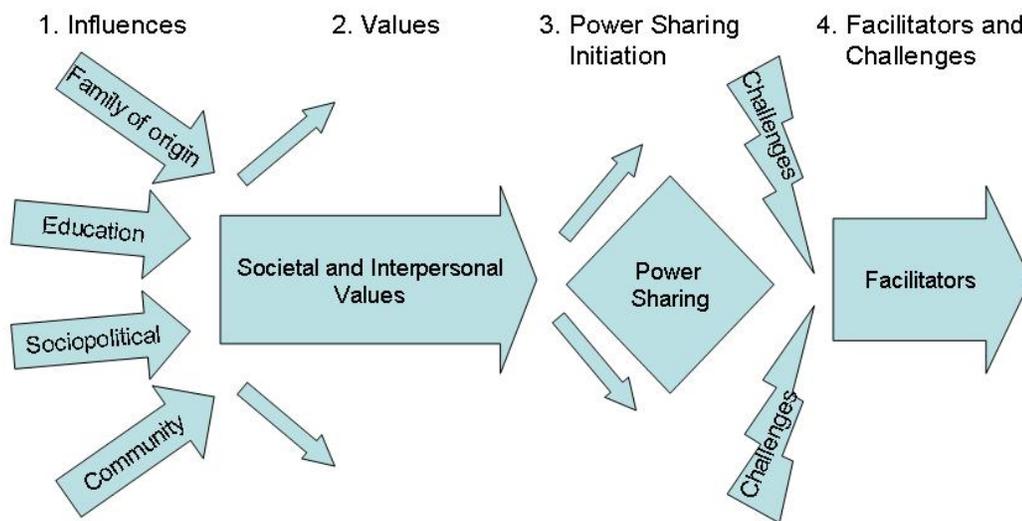
The purpose of the present study was to articulate a framework for understanding the motivation for men to engage in power-sharing marital relationships. Grounded theory methodology was employed to analyze the interviews of 13 men who were identified as power-sharing. As detailed in chapter 3, semi-structured interviews were conducted asking these men about experiences and attitudes that motivated them to pursue a power-sharing marital relationship. A detailed and in-depth analysis of the interview transcripts revealed eight key categories capturing the participants' lived experience and their perceptions. The relationships among these key categories was examined in order to produce a tentative theory explicating the motivators and influences that inspire men to seek or engage in a power-sharing marital relationship, as well as the facilitators and challenges to maintaining a power-sharing marriage. This chapter is divided into two sections: the first offers a general overview of the emergent theory, while the second section details the individual components of the model in order to capture the richness and complexity of the model as it describes the lives of the men in this study.

### *Overview of Emerging Theory*

The framework was developed after three levels of coding which yielded eight key categories: 1) the power-sharing relationship; 2) family of origin; 3) influences related to power-sharing; 4) values; 5) power-sharing decisions and timing; 6) partner characteristics; 7) facilitators; and 8) challenges. These categories were then grouped into four main constructs: 1) Pre-Marital Influences; 2) Values; 3) Power-sharing

Initiation; and 4) Facilitators & Challenges. A careful examination of the relationships among these constructs of interest stimulated the development of this emerging theory. The theory has two interdependent parts. The first part describes an integrated framework for understanding the complex path men may follow that leads them, deliberately or otherwise, to a power-sharing marital relationship. The second part posits facilitators and challenges that men encounter when maintaining a power-sharing marital relationship. A relatively linear representation of the emerging model appears in Figure 1. The linearity of this model lends itself well to testing through quantitative methods.

Figure 1.



The emergent theory is composed of contextual spheres of influence (the sociopolitical context, the family, the community and the academic environment) that work together to foster the development of societal (justice, equity, gender equality,

anti-discrimination) and interpersonal (mutual respect, reciprocity, family-first, complex connection with life partner) values. In turn, these values, whether consciously or subconsciously, influence or lead men to choose a partner, to adopt an active parenting style, and to embrace a power-sharing orientation.

The graphic depicted in Figure 1 also indicates that there were many points along this path where other options presented themselves. Since the power-sharing marriage is non-traditional and is clearly antithetical to gender socialization and to common institutional policies in the social and work environments, these other paths represent more conventional options. However, the men in this study remained on the path toward a power-sharing marriage despite these other, possibly more socially acceptable, options.

The path does not simply end once the power-sharing relationship is initiated. Due to the current sociopolitical climate in the U.S., where power-sharing is not the norm, the power-sharing family is forever relying on facilitators to help maintain the power-sharing status and is also constantly confronted with challenges to overcome in order to maintain this status. At any juncture, when faced with a challenge or absent a facilitator, these men could abandon power-sharing and ease into a more traditional role. However, the men in this study chose an orientation where they disregarded these other paths despite the challenges they confronted.

#### *Explication of the Emergent Theory*

This section describes in detail the components of the emergent theory, which includes four main constructs: 1) Pre-Marital Influences; 2) Values; 3) Power-Sharing Initiation; and 4) Challenges and Facilitators. These constructs each represent a

different developmental stage of the path described in the preceding section.

However, this section begins with a description of the path's destination, the power-sharing marriage. In order to understand the impact of each stage of development, one must first understand the endpoint, which is the concept of power-sharing itself.

Power-sharing, from the point of view of the 13 men who participated in this study, is described below and is then followed by a complex description of the four main constructs of the emerging theory.

For the purposes of clarity and narration, it is important to note that when the men's own words are cited, the participant is not identified or differentiated in any way. The deliberate homogeneity of the sample makes the use of descriptors or identifiers fairly meaningless. However, it is important to note general characteristics of the men in this study. Therefore, included here is a brief demographic summary of the sample. The ages of the participant men ranged from 31-43 years of age with an average age of 37. Ten of the 13 men identified their race/ethnicity as Caucasian, one identified as Asian Indian, one as African American and one as Middle Eastern. Every participant was college educated and twelve of the thirteen had advanced degrees: eight with Master's degrees and four with Doctorates. Six participants reported a family income between \$50,000 and \$100,000 annually. Seven participants reported a family income between \$100,000 and \$200,000 annually. When asked about political party affiliation, nine of the participants identified as Democrats, one as a Republican, one as an Independent and two were unaffiliated. As was required for eligibility, each of the men had been married for at least five years: the range of years married was 5.5 to 16 years of marriage with an average of 8.5 years. The

majority of the participants had two children, and the children's ages ranged from 5 months to 15 years.

Similar to a system used by Richie, Fassinger, Linn, Johnson, Prosser and Robinson (1997), the men's responses are discussed according to the following notation: a) Wording using "most," "generally," "typically," "usually," "the majority," "the men in this sample," "often" indicates the characteristic response of a majority of the sample (7 or more participants); b) wording using "a number of," "several," "some" indicates responses from 4-6 participants; c) wording using "a few" indicates responses from three or less of the participants; d) more specific wording, such as "all," "only one," "half the sample," "all but one" occasionally is used.

#### What is Power Sharing?

As mentioned above, understanding the complexity of power-sharing as a general concept is critical if one is to understand the path taken by power-sharing men and the subsequent facilitators and challenges men face when maintaining power-sharing marriages. This section describes and illustrates the concept of power-sharing generated by the words of the power-sharing men in this study. The men described how they viewed power-sharing as a concept, shared their lived experiences of a power-sharing marriage, and described how their power-sharing marriages compared to those of their peers.

Based on past literature, the researcher originally defined the power-sharing marriage as: Marriages where partners hold mutual status, actively negotiate roles, share decision-making, and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks. When the men in the study were asked about this definition and about the lived

realities of power-sharing, four main concepts emerged repeatedly as components of a power-sharing marriage for the men in this study: 1) *Shared parenting and child care*; 2) *Shared household tasks and responsibilities*; 3) *Shared decision-making*; and 4) *Mutual commitment to career and employment status*.

First, all the men in this study indicated that *shared parenting and child care* was a core component of a power-sharing marriage. In fact, not only did all the men in the study agree that shared parenting was a component of power-sharing, but the majority also indicated that is a *very* important, if not the most important, component. The following quotes from participant fathers illustrate how child care is shared in their families:

“You know we do stuff for them at school. I’m a Brownie leader for my daughter. We sometimes have to take them to parties. As a parent, you never want to go to some kid’s party, but we split it all up, and we try and do that not just for ourselves, but so the kids will see that we’re both involved and we both care.”

“Tangibly, we trade off taking care of him. There is never an assumption that one or the other of us is responsible for him at any given moment, so we’re constantly checking [with each other]. So, in terms of caring for him, everything from taking him to the doctor to working out childcare stuff to changing his diapers, is shared.”

“I’m an actively involved father. I drive carpools, I pick up carpools, I change diapers.... with both of us working, we both have to do it all – doctor’s appointments or when one kid is sick, we have to figure out who’s gonna be home and who’s not. But because of that, we’re both very close with our kids, and they both see us a lot. There’s not one person home all the time, they get both.”

Although the study’s original definition included “actively negotiate roles” as a key factor in power-sharing, many of these men reported that the roles in their household are actually fluid and flexible and not actively negotiated. *Shared Parenting* and *Shared household tasks and responsibilities* were identified by all the

participants as components of power-sharing; however, for the men in this study, the way in which these roles are shared is done organically rather than actively established. As one father described it, “we just fill in gaps when gaps need to be filled.” When sharing thoughts about the definition of power-sharing, three other participants shared the following,

“We don’t have preconceived notions of what each other should do. We don’t have notions of what the roles should be. We just do what needs to be done.

“There isn’t a need to keep score....whoever comes home first, whoever happens to think about it first [does the job]....the roles and responsibilities are even and not assigned.”

“I’m home in the afternoon so I can cook. I don’t think we ever had any kind of discussion about [roles] like if I cook, you are going to clean it. I think she just decided, ‘look if you’re going to do the cooking, that’s the least I can do.’”

Another component of power-sharing that was discussed by the majority of the participants was *Shared decision-making*. This concept included ideas like:

“consistent and constant consultation,” “no unilateral decisions,” “work by consensus” and “discuss before you do.” One participant shared,

“Before we make any big decision with regards to any life changes, whether it be career or it could be something to do with a purchase of any asset or anything, we obviously consult with each other. Even if it is a small thing, like to buy something for the house, we do consult with each other.”

In addition, many of the men specifically stated that sharing financial decision-making and budgeting is critical to successful power-sharing. These men felt it was imperative that both partners are knowledgeable about the family’s finances and are included in all decisions related to investment, budgeting and expenditure.

The majority of the men interviewed also included *mutual commitment to career and employment status* as a major component of power-sharing. This category

includes ideas such as: 1) both partners should have the opportunity to pursue a career and to advance in that chosen career; 2) employment status is never assumed; 3) either or both partners could work full-time, part-time or stay-at-home as long as it was decided mutually; and 4) both partners' careers are prioritized and viewed equally important. When asked about what power-sharing means to him, one participant responded,

“The first thing that came to mind for power-sharing was career. And that is where both my wife and I have made a lot of sacrifices for each other's careers, or sacrifices as a family for our careers, but balancing it.”

Many participants discussed striving for balance in multiple contexts. In categories already mentioned, participants described trying to find a balance between work and child care responsibilities as well as between work and household responsibilities.

The words that follow describe trying to balance two equally important careers:

“We both strive for our own professional careers, so, at times, you ask how do you strike that balance? You have to say, this is good for you from a work perspective so I have to take a little bit more responsibility at home....and I think we both understand and do that.”

Although *shared parenting and child care, shared household tasks and responsibilities, shared decision-making; and mutual commitment to career and employment status* were the key components of power-sharing as outlined by the majority of the men in this sample, some of the men also suggested that *mutual status in the family* was an important factor of power-sharing. Within this concept, men spoke about no hierarchy in their marital relationship or said that there was “no head of the household” in their families. The following are words of two men in the study describing the mutual status in their households:

“With our friends, it doesn’t take long for you to find out who’s driving the train. I don’t think people can tell that with our household.”

“I think others would see [our marriage] pretty equitably in terms of how we make decisions, how work is divided, income is roughly the same, so there is really no one dominant party.”

When the participant men were asked whether they believe power-sharing was beneficial for all families or whether it was simply an individual choice for them, the majority of men in the sample believed power-sharing to be best for all families. In fact, the majority felt very strongly that power-sharing is equated with a strong and healthy marriage. In addition, others suggested that “society would be better” if all marriages were power-sharing. As one participant shared:

“Power-sharing is clearly the best thing for everybody. It doesn’t generate any resentment. I mean most of the world’s problems can be taken care of if we all behave as though we’re adults and respect each other.....if something needs to be done, whether you need the car fixed or to make the dishes go from the sink into the dishwasher, it’s just easier to do that. It’s easier and better, and I think it makes everyone happier.”

A few of the participants were convinced that power-sharing was an individual choice and that it wasn’t necessarily best for all. These men felt as though power-sharing would not work if both partners did not want to share power or if one partner wanted to abdicate power. A couple of the men generally seemed uncomfortable suggesting that they knew what was best for anyone’s family other than their own. One participant suggested the following:

“I would not necessarily try and apply that model to everybody because it depends on personalities. You have to have a person, going in to that type of relationship, who says, ‘wow, I’m okay with not having to be the ultimate decider for all decisions of the household.’”

When the 13 men in this study were asked how their power-sharing relationships and families compared to that of their peers, the majority saw

themselves, their relationships, and their families as different from the “average family” or from the “normal man.” On the other hand, the majority also reported being similar to their closest male friends and those who make up their social circle. It seems clear that these men and their families have surrounded themselves with like-minded families and individuals who provide support and security.

When probed about the ways in which they differ from the average man or family, two central themes emerged. All the men described their marital relationships as far more egalitarian than the average, and the majority described themselves as far more involved fathers than the average father. Where these men did think it very important to distinguish their marital relationships from that of the average marriage, of even greater importance seemed to be distinguishing their involvement with their children. The majority of men in this sample were most passionate when discussing their role as parent compared to the average father. When asked to describe this comparison, two men responded in the following ways:

“You see other kids interact with their parents, and it’s always about the mother, you know, the kids usually go to the mother when they’re crying. My kids come to me or my wife....There is a difference in how [my children] react [compared to peers].

I remember one time my when my daughter was up a couple nights in a row and my wife didn’t think that anything was really wrong. I did...so I took her into the doctor, and she had an ear infection. I ran her to CVS and got her an antibiotic and like two hours later she already felt way, way better. And I was like, this is the coolest thing in the world. I’ve never really been able to explain what exactly happened there, but it was like a connection between me and my daughter. I took care of it. This is something that I can do, and I enjoy doing. I think most dads miss that.

When comparing themselves with the “average man,” a number of the participants also mentioned that they spend the majority of their free time with their families

where the “average man” does not. Most of the men suggested that they choose to fill any free time with family activities. On a related point, several men observed that they have far less leisure time than many of their peers who, for example, play golf regularly on weekends or who attend happy hours after work on a regular basis.

Based on the responses of men in this sample, the key components of power-sharing include: *Shared parenting and child care; Shared household tasks and responsibilities; Shared decision-making; and Mutual commitment to career and employment status.* The majority of the men believe that these components of power-sharing are best for all families and view power-sharing as an ideology beneficial for all. In addition, these power-sharing men recognize that they are different from the “average” man in two very important ways: their marriages are significantly more egalitarian, and they are far more involved with their children. Based on the stories and lived experiences of these men, a somewhat refined description of power-sharing has emerged and includes the components mentioned above. In addition, these men have confirmed the belief that they and their family structure are different than the norm or “average.” It is important to understand these participant’s thoughts about power-sharing as well as their interpretation of themselves as unique before venturing into the following sections which detail the constructs involved in their journey toward a power-sharing marital relationship.

### Construct 1: Pre-Marital Influences

The first step in the path hypothesized by the emerging theory is: Pre-Marital Influences. It is helpful to view these influences as “pre-marital” influences in that these are influences that preceded the participant’s engagement in his current

relationship. Some of the influences these men mentioned were from childhood, some from adolescence, and many from early adulthood. The influences that emerged represent different contextual spheres in the lives of these men. The following are the influences identified most often by the men in the sample: *Family of Origin, Education, Sociopolitical Context and Community*. Family of Origin seemed to be the most significant source of influence and was certainly the most complex of all the influences mentioned. Therefore, explanation of family of origin is lengthier than the others in this section to recognize its unique contribution.

### *Family of Origin*

The majority of the men in this sample described their family of origin as very traditional. When probed, these men explained a traditional division of labor between their parents where their mothers, even if they worked outside the home, took care of the child care and domestic responsibilities, and their fathers worked outside the home and were considered “the providers.” Most reported a stay-at-home mother and a father who worked a minimum of 40 hours per week outside the home. In addition, the men in this sample described their fathers as “head of the household” where his job and needs took precedence over most other family experiences. The words of one participant summed up this type of traditional relationship:

“My dad is a retired foreign service officer, so growing up we would move to different places where his job would take him. My mom, she actually worked frequently, but certainly his career would take precedence over hers. In terms of child care and child rearing, my mom did that whether she was working or not and was much more involved with the day to day tasks. Not that my dad was absent – I can remember playing basketball with him, but she was certainly more responsible for making sure all the day to day needs were being met for everyone in the family.”

A few men in this sample reported that their families of origin were non-traditional. In these three cases, the participants saw their families as non-traditional because their fathers were actively involved in the family. These fathers were involved in doctor appointments, school events, sports teams, and bedtime routines, and the participants recognized that this involvement had differed from that of their school friends. However, even in these cases, the mothers stayed at home full-time and were the primary caregivers for the children and the household.

#### Father involvement

Father involvement seemed to be a major influence in the lives of the 13 participants in this study. Only four men described their fathers as involved to very involved. At the same time, none of the participants described their fathers as not at all involved. The majority described their fathers as minimally involved during childhood. Often when the participants described their father's involvement, they made statements such as, "well, he wasn't absent" or "he was around." The majority described their fathers' involvement as nearly exclusively in leisure, athletic or fun activities. As one man put it,

"I don't know if my dad ever changed a diaper. He never did any of the chauffeuring or anything like that. The extent he was involved in my life was he would help me practice for little league, you know, the manly kinds of things that you do. No kind of serious discussions about anything. Emotions he left that up to my mom, he was not there for that. He was certainly traditional in that sense."

Another participant shared:

"My father growing up was involved with us in terms of [fun stuff]. He was coach of our Little League sports. He took us to baseball games and taught us how to play card games, or when he came home from work, we played a game of Horse while my mom was making dinner."

Father involvement is salient because the majority of participants acknowledged that, at some point, they consciously knew they wanted to be different than their fathers or they acknowledge a subconscious desire to be different considering how actively involved they now are as parents. As one father put it,

“I knew I wanted to be more active. I wanted to be engaged with my kids. I knew what I had missed, and I wanted to make sure that my children did not miss that too.”

Another participant said,

“My dad never cooked a meal ever, not one, and basically never washed a dish..... It wasn't like he was uninvolved with the kids. He would coach athletic teams and teach us things. He worked hard and there was just that division where my mom was involved with us day-to-day, and he worked. [My wife and I] don't have that. I didn't want that. I guess it was fine for his time maybe, but I like [what I have] better.”

The few men who described involved fathers offered that they consider their fathers to be role models, and that they always planned to parent as their fathers had.

One of these fathers said:

“When it came time to taking us to doctor's appointments, it wasn't this idea of, okay, you take him to the doctor and let me know how it works out. [My father] was right there with us, so the four of us were in the doctor's on a Saturday morning at 8 am.....Having that very active dad was really important for me to say, wow, here's what you need to do, and it really became non-negotiable in terms of my own mindset.”

As seems evident, father involvement was influential regardless of the level of involvement: those participants who didn't have involved fathers strive to parent differently and more actively than their fathers, and those participants who did have involved fathers want to emulate their father's parenting style – they recognize benefits they gained from having an involved father.

### Parents' Marriage

Similar to the influence of father involvement, a number of the participants acknowledged that their parents' marriage was a strong influence on them. Many of these men consciously sought marriages different from that of their parents. The conscious desire to parent differently than their fathers seemed to be a bit stronger of an influence than the desire to organize their marital relationships differently than their parents. However, some participants admitted that they had not consciously thought about the influence of their parents' relationship before our interview; yet, as they thought about it in the moment, they realized the significance:

“That’s funny because I haven’t thought about this explicitly, but I have to say that I did explicitly reject what I’d seen in my parent’s relationship because not only did it not seem fair, it didn’t seem functional. The division of labor is like, why? What does it serve?..... Again, part of the rejection of what I grew up with is that it just didn’t make a lot of sense.”

Regardless of whether participants said that they consciously wanted a different type of relationship than their parents had, the majority of participants acknowledged that their current relationships are indeed very different from that of their parents. This acknowledgement is apparent through many of the previous quotes already shared in this section. It seems apparent that whether conscious or otherwise, the participant's parents' marriage and the level of father involvement were influential factors for the majority of men in this sample.

### Relationship with Mother

Interestingly, the 13 participants in this study focused more on their relationships with their fathers than they did their relationships with their mothers. Most participants spent time discussing their mother's role in the family focusing on

her role as the traditional homemaker, even if the mother worked part-time or went into the workforce after her children were grown. Only one participant specifically described his mother as influential. The participant described his mother as a feminist, despite the fact that she was in a traditional marriage. This participant was significantly influenced by his mother who confided in him her deep disappointment and unhappiness in her marriage. When discussing his mother he said,

“Through so much of my childhood there was actually a conflict over prescribed roles. [My father] just didn’t want to do anything, and she was just stuck doing everything, including earning more money, actually..... I first learned about gender roles through my parent’s relationship. From early childhood, there was an explicit conflict.....I observed them, but I’d say that I learned to interpret what was going on from talking to my mom. She gave me context.....I’ll be honest with you, [power-sharing] was actually primarily an indoctrination by my mother.”

Although the participants shared few details about their relationships with their mothers, many did report being generally closer to their mothers growing up than to their fathers. These participants described their relationships with their fathers as “distant” or “superficial.” Although some admitted to conflict with their mothers, these same participants indicated that the conflict itself represented a lack of closeness with their fathers. That is, they were not close enough with their fathers to have any conflict. Several reported that even as adults, they continue to feel closer to their mothers than their fathers.

The family of origin of these participants seems to have been a powerful and unique influence. For many participants, it was within the family of origin that they first began to consider how they would want to organize their own marriages and how they would want to parent. For most, the recognition of this desire for difference came as they reached adulthood; however, it seems clear, based on the responses of

the participants, that even as children, they observed and recognized the gendered division of labor that subliminally manifested into a questioning of its effectiveness and fairness. In addition, the participants' strong desire to be more active parents than their fathers indicates that they did not feel as though their own fathers' parenting was adequate.

### *Education*

As was outlined when discussing the demographics of the men in the sample, all of the men were college graduates. In fact, all but one of the participants had an advanced degree. When discussing early influences, many of the men in this sample quickly identified college as an influential time in their lives. Most of these men talked about growing up or developing a sense of self in college. Specifically, a number of these men identified college generally, and/or courses they took specifically, as life altering:

“College certainly changed the course of my life. There’s no other way to say it. And I think I always had sort of empathy and the sense that things weren’t the way that they should be, but I think that [those courses in peace studies and conflict resolution] helped me with my own sense of self. Sort of set me on a course where both in my personal life and my professional life, I was more aware of trying to change the way that people work with each other.”

Another participant concurred with the power of the college experience:

“I think [college] was just pretty transformative...I think I came out of college pretty different. I certainly think by the end of college I would have called myself a liberal, and I would not have really labeled myself one way or the other when I went to college. So college certainly played a role.”

Many participants attributed this development to “good professors,” “interesting readings,” “ideological classmates,” “philosophical discussions,” “a broad liberal arts curriculum,” and “the encouragement of critical thinking.” Many suggested that

college was the first place where their studies challenged conventional thinking and/or the status quo. For example, men discussed many courses that broadened their thinking and helped form the values they hold today:

“One of my political theory classes included feminist theory. It was part of my overall studies. It was enough for a light bulb to go off.”

“I took a literature course that was taught by a feminist. Many of the writers we read were female, and it was early American literature.....It appealed to my egalitarian leanings. However, with this course, it all began to make sense that women are really equal and all of that.”

College seemed to be a powerful time of self-exploration as well as a time for obtaining new and exciting information. The men in this study seemed to find college to be a time and context of significant influence.

### *Sociopolitical Context*

It was not uncommon for the men in the sample to identify political discourse and observation of the sociopolitical context as important to their development. The amount and timing of exposure to political ideology varied from participant to participant. Some were children of activist parents,

“My father was friends with Ken Kesey; my father was a 60’s intellectual. When we lived in Chicago, we went to parties with Black Panthers where we were the only white people. So the talk was really good but just like the whole 60s movement, there was a lot of great talk about civil rights and feminism, but a lot of stuff was still getting worked through.”

A few of the men talked about having parents who shared their interest in politics:

“I remember as far back as 1973 when I was nine years old. I remember the ERA. I remember when Gloria Steinem was doing her thing. I was paying attention because my parents were interested in politics. We watched a lot of the news. They were interested in it, and we talked about it.”

One participant talked about a general interest in following politics and listening to political opinion. In addition, a couple men commented on the injustice they saw within society:

“I mean I remember hearing various political commentators talk about why it is really better for women to stay home. They tend to be Republicans and have a certain economic outlook. If part of that is true, then it just seemed to me that socially we should be trying to do something different. If there are a lot of economic disincentives for women to work, then let’s change that....I guess I started to realize, the whole core values that I have were really more liberal.”

For these men, early exposure to politics and attention to the sociopolitical climate of the times was highly influential.

### *Community*

Many of the men discussed the influence of their communities on their development. Included within this category of community are the influence of early friendships, neighborhoods, and religious communities. A couple of the men talked about the communities or neighborhoods in which they grew up as being influential. One man talked about his “liberal community that was very much anti-traditional gender roles” and “anti-conformity” generally. Another participant discussed the opposite – growing up in a conservative southern city:

“There was a definite, very strong macho guy/cheerleader girl sort of culture [where I grew up]. In high school, [gendered activity] was just sort of the way things were....There are not a lot of women that I went to high school with who placed a priority on career.”

A number of other participants discussed the influence of their close friends. A few participants discussed friends who shared with them a particular ideology or who worked actively for movements such as the environmental or civil rights movements. Others discussed female friends who challenged stereotypes and whom the

participants found “engaging.” Finally, a few participants discussed the influence of their religious community. The following is how one participant described the influence of his religious community:

“I would have to say that part of it came from a religious upbringing...I got from [Christianity] that people are equal...Christianity always had that sort of emphasis on equality. And there is also an element of critical thinking to it, to Protestantism especially, so I think that, for me, religion worked in that direction.”

The other participants who identified with a religious community echoed the sentiment above. Within their religious communities, the teachings included equality and justice as well as the priority of family.

### Construct 2: Values

The second stage in the developmental progression outlined in the emergent theory is the acquisition of values. As may already be evident based on the previous section, many of the early influences in these men’s lives were formative in their development of core values. In this section, these values are divided into two categories: societal values and interpersonal values.

#### *Societal values*

All but one of the participants identified societal values as contributing to their motivation to engage in a power-sharing marital relationship. The list of these values includes: equity, gender equality, justice/fairness and non-discrimination. In the previous section, many of the quotes that illustrated early influences also alluded to the development of these very values. The following are some additional ways the participants described these values:

“I think I have a strong sense of right and wrong and what is fair and what is not fair”

“I believe in equality. I believe in justice and fairness. I do believe in sacrifice for the common good.”

“Gender oppression is unfair, unjust...I feel very strongly about that. When a person becomes frustrated, it is easy to oppress somebody else or to oppress the one whom you can oppress easily, and that often turns out to be a spouse or someone with less power...that bothers me quite a bit.”

“What makes [power-sharing] right is that it doesn't discriminate against women or men....and I think that anything less than that doesn't allow people to reach their potential.”

“It's about fairness and being equitable....It is trying to structure the world and relationships in a way that not only respects people's rights but allows them to fulfill their potential.”

The participants' societal value orientation often emerged quickly as a response to questions about what motivates them to power-share. However, sometimes the discussion of values was a result of significant probing related to attitudes and beliefs. What became clear was that, for some, these societal values were conscious motivators, and for others, they were more subconscious. Most of the sample did identify these societal values as consciously motivating. However, even within that group, a few men had not considered the connection between their societal values and their motivation to power-share prior to our interview. They did indeed make this connection when probed during the interview itself. It seems apparent that one can hold these values strongly, but not readily connect them to a personal sphere such as a marriage. For example, one man shared the following:

“I believe in equality and things like that, so [power-sharing] is consistent with that, but I'm not sure that's what really drove me, to tell you the truth, in terms of picking a spouse....But I think that [my wife and I] have adopted equality as a philosophy. I don't know if it's always so explicit, but I think it is almost an organizing principle that we feel is important to adhere to.”

Whether explicit or implicit, conscious or subconscious, all the men but one identified these societal values as important in their development as a person and as a power-sharing father and partner. Many discussed them with conviction and connected them to the way in which they interact in the world.

### *Interpersonal Values*

Unlike the societal values mentioned in the preceding section, the men of this sample were consciously aware of the relationship between their interpersonal values and their power-sharing marriage. All of the men identified a number of interpersonal values as power-sharing motivators. The values these men identified were clustered to form four categories: Mutual Respect, Reciprocity, Family-first and Complex Connection with Partner.

#### Mutual respect

It was not uncommon for the men of this sample to discuss the importance of mutual respect in relationships. These men often spoke in context of marital relationships but many also spoke more generally about the importance of respecting others.

“My name means ‘respecting G-d.’ ....It is a little name, but basically it means respecting. I don’t know if the personality came from the name or the name came from the personality or if it was just a coincidence but [respect] is an important part of who I am.”

A number of the men implied that mutual respect and love were intertwined:

I think my main motivation now is I certainly want to continue to get love and respect from my wife and I’m not going to get that unless I show her the same love and respect.

In addition, mutual respect seemed to be seen as an ingredient for a healthy marriage. In the words of one of the participants, “If you respect somebody, that is the way, the best way, to make [the marriage] work.”

### Reciprocity

Reciprocity, in various ways, surfaced as a motivating value for the majority of the men in this sample. A number of the men spoke about the importance of “sharing the burden.” One man said, “I couldn’t imagine having to make all the decisions, and I certainly couldn’t live in a situation where I was expected to do that.” Another man simply said, “I couldn’t take [all the power] – it is too much responsibility.” The following participant was very clear about his interpretation of this value:

“On a more selfish front, I didn’t want to have the burden all on me, you know, to be, well, to go out and kick ass in the world, and [be told] you will do the providing or you will be a failure. You know, I don’t accept or want that challenge, thanks very much.”

Another participant offered this similar comment:

“I guess I just personally wanted an equal partner. I didn’t ever want to be lord of the manor, so we just worked it out that way....I didn’t want to be the only one responsible for bringing in income.”

Others talked about the desire to have a reliable partner as well as the importance of being a “reliable” partner, one who could “do whatever needs to be done” and “take initiative.” Relatedly, these men discussed the importance of being dependable and being able to depend on their partner. In response to the question about motivators for power-sharing, one participant responded:

“It is this whole idea for me of having a partner that I know can take care of whatever needs to get done. If I am not there, if I am incapacitated, knowing things could get done, that is predominant for me over anything else.....it’s

that type of comfort level that feels like, wow, I don't have to worry about whether she is going to do her part... So, I think for me that's an essential core belief or attitude, if you will, I know that you're going to bring your share to the table."

Another participant explained:

"I am able to rely on my partner to pick up the slack and she's able to rely on me. And it doesn't matter what kind of slack it is. If it's work related slack or if it's parental slack or whatever, there is what we call partnership where we are able to help each other in many different ways."

Reciprocity in its various forms seemed to be an important motivator for the men in this study.

### Family First

The prioritization of family generally, and relationships with children specifically, was a central theme of many of the interviews conducted. The majority of the sample identified the value of "family first" as a significant motivator in pursuing a power-sharing marital relationship. As mentioned in the previous section regarding family of origin, many of these men actively sought different relationships with their children than they had with their fathers. One man explained how he sees his responsibility to his children and the importance of this prioritization:

"I don't want someone else raising my kid. I am certainly not the best parent in the world but I feel that, with the exception of my wife, I know what is best for my kids.....and I think in general a kid is going to be happier and more secure if you're spending time with them. I think it is my job to help them out with school and it's my job to make them responsible productive adults. If I wasn't to do that, I would feel badly."

For some, it was clear that active involvement in their child's life was the primary motivator for organizing their power-sharing marriage. As one man explained,

"My wife will be the first one to tell you that, for me, being the active dad is very important. Whatever our son happens to be – whether it is university related, sports related or work related, if someone were to ask him about it,

like an interview on the street, I want him to say, ‘Thanks Mom *and* Dad.’ That ‘and Dad’ is very important to me. And so I think, when you talk about internal drives, for me it is very important for him to know whether it is at 5, at 18, at 35 at 55, that his dad was always there. That’s extremely important to me. That is probably the number one motivator for me.”

Another father shared the following:

“I enjoy my job, but I can take it or leave it. Family comes first....I think just watching my kids grow up on a daily basis, it blows me away....Just watching it all – it is amazing. It is truly an amazing thing. So that in itself is motivating....I’ll never forget the moment my first child was born, my life changed....I thought about things in terms of I would be the best father I possibly could and the best husband.”

The value of family prioritization was clearly a very important and very salient motivator for most of the men in the sample.

#### Complex Connection with Partner

The vast majority of men in the sample discussed the importance of having a partner with whom they could engage in interesting conversation, with whom they could relate, and with whom they found stimulating. Again, this value emerged in multiple ways. The following is an explanation from one man in the sample:

“I don’t feel alone the way I think some of my other friends do. They have to go outside of their most intimate relationship to get the support and feedback about how things are going and what they should be doing and how they should react. I thrive on the fact that I always have someone to talk to – about my career and where it is going – with someone who also has a career.... That is one of the great aspects of my marriage. I don’t know what I would do without it.”

Many participants made statements such as, “You know, I am married to a friend” or “my wife is my best friend.” In general, these men value a multi-faceted, deep and complex relationship with their spouses. One man explained it this way,

“There is satisfaction, both emotional and intellectual satisfaction that you get by being with somebody who is really not viewing themselves as subservient, but as your equal....I think that there is a symbiosis between intellectual

stimulation and emotional and sexual stimulation. When one is lesser or missing, than the whole experience is less... You simply don't get as much out of your own existence really... The reward is obtaining deeper love."

Some stated it more simply and more concisely:

"I think if things were very traditional in terms of she stayed home, not only would she be unhappy, but I think she would be less of an interesting person."

Another responded similarly,

"I think I always wanted someone who was a partner, or someone who had a forceful personality. Someone to talk to and have interesting conversations with, and sort of really engage in that way. So, I think I just like people that way, so that is what I was looking for."

Even though the complexity of the spousal relationship looked and was described differently by the participants, it is evident that it was important for these men to have a more complex relationship with their partners than is traditional. Again, this value seemed to be a very salient and very important motivator towards power-sharing for these men.

### Construct 3: Power-Sharing Initiation

One of the primary factors in power-sharing initiation is the finding and choosing of a partner. Therefore, this section outlines the ways in which the men in this sample described the characteristics of their partners. In addition, this section examines the participants' decision-making process to power-share.

#### *Partner characteristics*

There was significant overlap and consistency in the ways in which these men described their partners. The participants most commonly described their partners with a listing of traits. Historically, men and women have been perceived to possess different traits where stereotypic male traits compose an instrumentality cluster, and

stereotypic female traits compose an expressivity cluster (Bem, 1974; Spence and Helmreich, 1978). Participants used both instrumental and expressive traits to describe their spouses. Table 2 displays the traits listed by the male participants to describe their spouses and where the traits are positioned on the instrumentality and expressivity clusters.

Table 2

Instrumental	Expressive
Intelligent	Caring
Ambitious	Nurturing
Stubborn	Thoughtful
Strong-willed	Selfless
Strong	Devoted
Independent	
Confident	
Smart	

Interestingly, the participants described their female partners using far more instrumental traits than expressive traits. In fact, all the men used instrumental traits to describe their partners whereas not all used expressive traits in their descriptions. Many of the participants did describe their partners with both instrumental and expressive traits; however, a number of the men used three or more instrumental traits to describe their partners where none of the men used more than two expressive traits to describe their partners.

In American society, instrumental traits often are deemed more valuable and/or important. Perhaps it is this positive evaluation of these traits that accounts for the high number of instrumental traits used by the men to describe their spouses. However, another possibility is that these men were attracted to women who possessed more stereotypically male, or instrumental characteristics. In addition, it is

equally possible that women who possess the outlined instrumental traits are those who are most likely to pursue and engage in power-sharing marriages. It is difficult to ascertain the directionality of the relationship between these traits and the engagement in power-sharing among these men and women.

*Decision-making Process to Power-share*

Most of the men in the sample reported that the decision to initiate a power-sharing marriage was a deliberate or a conscious choice. Some were very adamant about the decision being deliberate:

“It was absolutely a conscious decision. I remember talking to friends about this a decade before I even met my wife, so absolutely..... I remember complaining to my friends that the relationship I was in didn’t match my vision of the partnership I wanted.....[my girlfriend at the time] was talking like she didn’t want to have a career. Some of my friends were like, ‘a lot of guys in your situation would think that is a good thing because that will enable you to go out and do whatever you want.’”

Many of the men talked generally about pursuing a particular type of partner and being consciously aware of the women with whom they felt most compatible.

Therefore, the choice of partner was what often seemed most deliberate; however, the choice of partner and the decision to power-share were often co-mingled as in the following example:

“Finding a partner that didn’t necessarily want defined gender roles was important. I guess from that respect, some people do want to stay home and want a husband who is going to provide even if that means working until 8:00 at night. So, I obviously didn’t want to find a partner where that was the expectation of me. I wanted a partner who could let me define my role.”

Several of the men suggested that the power-sharing unfolded over time or “just happened.” These men were reluctant to say that they had thought about the components of power-sharing before their current relationships. According to this

subset of men, once they met their current partners, the power-sharing evolved naturally. One participant said that he believes that the power-sharing decision came with the birth of his first child:

“I guess you don’t think about [power-sharing] until it is right there in front of you. Thinking back to when I first got married and my wife got pregnant, sure we talked about how wonderful it would be to have kids and certainly thought about how we would make the family work, how the ship is going to run on time....., but until the moment [the child is born], you don’t really know. When it happens, that is when the switch gets turned on. When she was born, I was ready to be a father, ready to do whatever I needed to do.”

Not surprisingly, the same men who said that power-sharing was a deliberate choice also said that they made the decision to power-share prior to initiating their current relationship. Most of the others who felt as though the power-sharing marriage unfolded over time said that the power-sharing began with the onset of their current relationship. Some men shared that they believe power-sharing is a continually evolving process that certainly changes and solidifies with the birth and growth of their children.

#### Construct 4: Challenges and Facilitators

The last part of the emerging theory is the preservation of the power-sharing marriage. All the men discussed constant challenges to overcome in the maintenance of a power-sharing marriage. In addition, each shared facilitators that made the power-sharing relationship possible despite the obstacles. The connection between the power-sharing relationship, the challenges and the facilitators is a dynamic one that is in constant need of attention and care.

### *Challenges*

When the men discussed the internal and external struggles related to power-sharing, a number of themes emerged. The primary challenges identified were related to 1) The Work-Family Balance, 2) The Struggles Inherent in the Consultative Approach, 3) The barriers to Career Advancement and 4) Aspects of the Workplace (for both partners).

#### The Work-Family Balance

Not unlike the findings from the past research on “working mothers,” the men in this study report difficulty with maintaining a comfortable work-family balance. A number of the men discussed feelings of guilt in both spheres: work and family. One participant shared his feelings of guilt:

“Certainly if things come up at night during the week that I have to do, I feel guilty. And, if it is work related, my wife completely understands, and it will all work out, but I still feel guilty.....And its kind of silly maybe but I do feel guilty. I was out of the country for work, and I felt bad. I talked to my wife everyday, we e-mailed, everything was fine, but I again felt guilty because she was at home with the kids.”

Many of the men endorsed the idea that they feel as though they are never able to give enough to either sphere. Also, many of the men discussed the challenging logistics involved in the work-family interface: organizing schedules, finding quality child care, managing the housework, staying current on bills and budgets, and maintaining flexibility for the unexpected crisis. When discussing the work-family balance, one man shared,

“I remember when we were starting out in our [power-sharing] relationship, I had a friend tell me that you can’t really have a two career family. He said you just can’t, and somebody’s career has to be dominant. I thought he was crazy....but I have realized that, to an extent, you can’t have limitless careers,

so he had a point. So, [my wife and I] both chose to kind of go 80% in our careers.”

It was not uncommon for the men to describe their day-to-day lives as “hectic” or “chaotic.” Many implied that organizing and managing the dual-career family is overwhelming and exhausting. One man shared:

“so the minus side for us having two parents who work outside of the house is everything has to become a schedule. So, whether it is doctor’s appointments, entertainment, everything comes down to, okay, let’s get out the calendars – what does your schedule look like? What does my schedule look like? And that is hard.”

Many of the men also described the challenge of deciding which partner is going to have to make a particular sacrifice (i.e., staying home from work with a sick child) and then ensuring that it is not always the same partner doing the sacrificing. The men discussed the difficulty with guaranteeing fairness between partners and the frustration involved in having to be the one to re-arrange one’s schedule at the last minute:

“There’s frustration. I definitely get frustrated when I have a deadline and my wife is – my wife does a lot of in-state traveling for her job – and she is two hours away and someone didn’t show up to pick the kids up. I gotta run out, and I don’t have a choice, I have to run out....I’ve had to miss plenty of meetings, and I really try not to travel because it is just hard on both of us.”

“The last two or three weeks our kids have taken turns getting sick, and both me and my wife are stressed out about it because neither of us can afford to take the time off work right now, but one of us has to.”

Most of the men in the sample identified the work-family balance as a significant challenge. It was apparent that these men were equally involved in the figuring out the balance as were their female partners. The specific examples given of difficulty in the work-family balance conveyed that these men, perhaps unlike their non power-

sharing counterparts, were involved in all aspects of the management and problem-solving.

### The Struggles Inherent in the Consultative Approach

Although the men in this study seemed quite proud of their power-sharing lifestyle, most men also admitted that the consultative approach to decision-making in the marriage was often challenging. Many discussed “painful and continuous negotiations” involved in decision-making and managing the household. One man said,

“Negotiation is hard, absolutely. I think I picked my partner wisely and that I could tell that we wanted mostly the same things, but inevitably....we have been married for seven years and have had some bumps in the road. Yeah, there is relatively a lot of negotiation.”

As mentioned in a previous section of this chapter, most men denied the active negotiation of roles and responsibilities; however, when discussing challenges, “constant negotiation” repeatedly arose as a struggle. As one participant said, “it’s quicker and easier and you’re more likely to get what you want if you take a non-consultative approach.” In fact, many admitted that there have been times they wished they could revert back to traditional roles and just be the one to make the decisions for the family. One man simply put it this way:

“Yeah, there is a desire to not have the conflict and to go back to ‘Leave it to Beaver,’ when all was very simple and mapped out. Wouldn’t that be nice?”

Another participant admitted the following:

“Whenever you share power there are compromises. It would be easier if I’m the number one dictator and could say, ‘I’ll make the decisions.’ The thing about where our next house is going to be or whether we just hold on to our current house – I would have made that decision a long time ago if that had been our relationship, but we don’t operate that way. It is hard. I mean as

much as I like sharing and for all the benefits we've talked about, there are times when we don't agree, and that is hard work."

A number of the participants acknowledged that it was particularly difficult to be "pushing back against tradition" and admitted that sometimes it does seem far easier, as a man, to fall back on the traditional model of father and husband.

### The Barriers to Career Advancement

Perhaps the most salient challenge mentioned by the men in this study was the barrier related to career advancement. Although the majority of the men saw the above mentioned challenges as significant, they were most passionate when discussing the very concrete and inflexible barriers they face when trying to build their careers. A related challenge is, of course, financial. Many of the men discussed sacrifices in income and salary based on their power-sharing lifestyle:

"It's also sacrificing your earnings potential. I'm certainly making a good bit less money than I would if I hadn't taken [the power-sharing] approach."

A number of men discussed having to make the choice between working long hours and making more money or working less and being a full participant in the family. As one participant said, "the trade off is work more, make more money, spend less time with family." Others said,

"I look at my friends who work from 8:00-8:00, and they are managers now, making a lot of money and climbing up the ladder. I feel like it is a slower process for me, not because I don't feel like I have the capability, but because I haven't necessarily been able to get the experience because I can't put the hours in."

"Yeah, even if my wife stayed at home, I'm not the type of person who could work until 7 or 8. I've known that my whole life. .... Nowadays, the only way to make more money is to work until 7 or 8 and it's just not me. I'm not going to do it. It is not worth it.....It's problematic, I feel like it's definitely a road block to my further progression and success at work because sometimes I just

can't stay late....I often think that if I either didn't have kids or if I didn't want this [power-sharing] marriage, I would be much further along at work. In addition, the men often discussed changing jobs or turning down jobs in order to accommodate the power-sharing approach. In addition, many discussed not traveling or attending professional conferences because it would be too difficult to manage the household with one partner away.

“I mean sure there are jobs that I haven't taken. I could be probably a step further in my own career if it wasn't for family. It was a conscious decision that I don't regret at all. But, I mean, I turned down job offers for more money because I thought the job sounded like more than our family could handle and more than I could personally handle because I like my free-time with my family.”

Whether it was being overlooked for promotion, being denied tenure, or being deprived of more responsibility, these men shared distress related to the struggle to advance in their careers. One man shared that he has had moments where he has looked at his employment position, and thought to himself, “What is wrong with me?” Another admitted that it is difficult on his self-concept and self-esteem to feel as though others are advancing around him when he remains stagnant in his career. A number of men said it was difficult on their “ego” to be making less money and to have less prestige at work than their male peers.

#### Aspects of the workplace

Interestingly, while the men described difficulty in career advancement, they did not believe that their own workplaces presented salient challenges to power-sharing. Although these men do feel as though the general climate and gendered expectations of the U.S. workforce do create barriers and obstacles for advancement, they do not feel as though their personal workplaces pose major challenges to power-sharing. That said, many of men did identify some aspect of the workplace that

presented a challenge to power-sharing, but, overall, these challenges were not particularly salient. Several of the men shared that their jobs required some travel which was difficult. Others said that there were aspects of the job that were inflexible or where he needed to work under a deadline. As mentioned in the above section, many of the men in this sample consciously chose jobs and/or careers where they were able to be more flexible and fully engage in their family. Therefore, not identifying the workplace as a barrier may not be surprising. In fact, the next section discusses how, for the men in the sample, aspects of the workplace actually facilitate power-sharing more than they challenge it.

However, what seems salient is that it was not uncommon for the men in this sample to identify aspects of their partners' workplaces as challenging. A number of the men discussed their wives jobs as being "not flexible." Those who discussed this inflexibility suggested that it was a salient challenge to power-sharing. Other aspects of the partner's workplace that were challenging included poor workplace policies around leave generally and maternity leave specifically.

### *Facilitators*

When the participants considered what has helped them maintain a power-sharing marriage, two factors emerged: 1) Aspects of the Workplace and Work Schedule; and 2) Help From Extended Family.

When discussing their workplaces, the majority of the men described their workplace and work hours as "flexible" or even "very flexible" A few of the men even are able to set their own hours. A number of the participants described family-friendly workplaces that offer non-traditional options such as telecommuting,

compressed work schedules, or job sharing. A few additional men shared that their workplaces offered generous paid paternity and family leave. Most participants felt as though their workplaces were significantly family friendly. Specifically, these men spoke about supportive colleagues and understanding bosses,

“Well, if I get in late – if I have to drop my child off or take care of him or if I have to go for an after school activity, I just leave.....and [my employers] understand. So, when I have to take care of him, I can always move my work schedule. [My employers] see that I’m not trying to goof off from responsibilities.”

“I think the people I work for and work with are in similar relationships, so if I need to leave work because of something at home, whether it is just home stuff or stuff with my wife or stuff with my son, it is understood that you trade off with your wife on doing stuff like that.”

All of the above-mentioned aspects of the workplace were discussed as significant or very salient facilitators for power-sharing. A few men offered that they do not know how they would manage without the flexibility in the workplace. As mentioned in the above section regarding challenges, it seems as though the participant men had more flexible work hours and workplaces than their spouses.

In addition, more men in this sample worked either part-time or a non-traditional work week as compared to their spouses. Four of the men described working either part-time or on a non-traditional schedule (i.e., not the traditional 40-hour work week Monday-Friday). One father working part-time described how he found out about this option:

“I just went from full-time to part-time work because there was this part-time opportunity at work. I actually found out about it by accident because it was offered to all the women at work with kids. I only found out about it in the 11<sup>th</sup> hour when everyone else had turned it down. Some people, like my former boss, didn’t quite get it. But, if anything, I thought of taking it as a badge of honor.”

All the men who worked part-time or non-traditional hours thought this schedule was a very salient facilitator of power-sharing. In addition, most enjoyed working part-time and discussed how much more connected they felt to the family being home more often.

Another interesting facilitator mentioned by a few men in the sample was the “high status” of their wives’ jobs. A number of the participants shared that their wives were “the boss” or “in charge.” This level of prestige and status seemed to be both a benefit and a liability. On the one hand, these women could often create their own schedules or didn’t have employers “watching them.” However, a few men shared that their wives were also under tremendous stress and often had to work additional hours if there was a crisis or important deadline.

Several of the men in the sample also identified the help of extended family as a facilitator to power-sharing. Typically these men talked about the help of parents or in-laws; however, some also discussed the help of siblings or even very close family friends. For the most part, the help was in the form of babysitting or child care generally. For some, there was a parent who cared for the children regularly, and, for others, there was a parent or family member who was available for crisis care or the unexpected need for child care. Relying on this help and support seemed to be a comfort for most men in the study and made logistics easier and less overwhelming. A number of the men who do not have extended family nearby reported that they wish they had this support, recognizing how stress-relieving it could be to have a family member to rely on when the unexpected inevitably happens.

## Summary

In this chapter, results of thirteen semi-structured interviews with power-sharing men were presented and a tentative theoretical model for understanding the data was articulated. Eight key categories were revealed through data analysis and were further grouped into four constructs: Influences, Values, Power-Sharing Initiation, and Challenges and Facilitators. These constructs are interrelated and demonstrate the path of these power-sharing men as well as the facilitators they rely on and the challenges they must overcome to preserve their power-sharing marriages.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The goal of the present study was to identify factors that motivate men to engage in marital relationships where roles and power are shared. The growth in dual earner families in the U.S. makes understanding the unique motivations of power-sharing men critically important. This understanding is significant because past research has shown that men are unlikely to eschew traditional gender roles despite the influx of women into the workforce. Women are investing significantly more time and energy in the paid labor force; however, men's complementary time and energy invested in family caregiving is only minimally expanding. The uneven changes that have occurred in the structures of work and family perpetuate the unequal distribution of power in the heterosexual marriage, and the outcome is that women feel stressed and overburdened. For women to gain true equity and equal power, men must willingly share marital power and broaden their social roles to meet that of their female counterparts. The results of this study provided some insight into the development of these men who willingly power-share.

This chapter discusses the findings described in Chapter 4 in relation to the original research questions which served to guide the inquiry, the existing literature, the strengths and limitations of the study, and the implication for research and practice. As fully described in Chapter 4, a theoretical framework emerged that was based on the experiences of a sample of 13 power-sharing men. After careful analysis of the relationships between the salient categories, an emergent theory that tentatively outlines a developmental trajectory of power-sharing men was proposed. This

emergent theory also includes an explanation of the numerous challenges encountered and the facilitators needed to maintain the power-sharing marriage.

The analysis of the data presented in Chapter 4 helped refine and better understand the definition and experience of the power-sharing marriage. In addition, the analysis of the data suggests the following regarding the development of power-sharing men: 1) the influences of family, education, community and sociopolitical context were significant in the acquisition of core values; 2) the family of origin, and particularly a participant's relationship with his father, was paramount and seemed to have a uniquely strong influence on development; 3) the participant's development of core societal and interpersonal values seemed inspired by early influences and experiences; 4) the societal and interpersonal values were identified by participants as motivating factors for engagement in a power-sharing marriage; 5) participants were more likely to consciously recognize the relationship between their interpersonal values and their motivation to power-share than the relationship between their societal values and their motivation to power-share; 6) the decision to power-share was an active process, although the timing of the decision was variable; 7) significant challenges to maintaining the power-sharing relationship exist; and 8) power-sharing men must actively identify facilitators that aid in the preservation of the power-sharing marriage. The illustration of the emergent theory in which these findings are captured is presented in Chapter 4, Figure 1. This model captures a novel representation not previously posited in the literature and seems to be the first to outline a pathway that men assume toward power-sharing in marriage. The constructs of this emergent theory were presented in detail in Chapter 4 and are discussed here

in relation to the exploratory research questions postulated at the beginning of the present investigation.

### Discussion of Emerging Theory in Relation to Research Questions and Existing Literature

This section discusses the emerging theory in relation to the existing literature, organized around the following research questions:

*Research Question 1:* Does the study's definition of a power-sharing man capture the reality of the lived experience?

*Research Question 2:* How do power-sharing men view their relationships with their partners and their children?

*Research Question 2a:* How do these men believe their marital relationships compare to those of their peers?

*Research Question 3:* What are the internal facilitators of a men's engagement in a power-sharing relationship?

*Research Question 3a:* What are the values, attitudes, and feelings that contribute to a man's engagement in this type of relationship?

*Research Question 4:* How did these facilitators develop?

*Research Question 5:* What are some external factors that facilitate a man's engagement in a power-sharing relationship?

*Research Question 6:* What are the obstacles or barriers power-sharing men have encountered in committing to this type of relationship?

Does the study's definition of a power-sharing man capture the  
reality of the lived experience?

The definition and understanding of the power-sharing marriage as a lived experience was refined through analysis of the interview data. Although the refined definition is slightly different from the original used in recruitment, it is certainly similar. The original definition was devised based on past marital equality research (Blaisure and Allen, 1995; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005; Rosenbluth, Steil & Whitcomb, 1998; Zimmerman, Haddock, Current & Ziemba, 2003) and read as follows: Marriages where partners hold mutual status, actively negotiate roles, share decision-making, and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks. The revised definition would read as follows: The power-sharing marriage is one where partners share decision-making, share child care and parenting, share (or provide mutual attention to) household tasks and responsibilities, and there is a mutual commitment to partners' career and employment status.

There are a couple of interesting points about this revision. First, the men of this sample seemed uncomfortable with the part of the original definition that read, "actively negotiate roles." Most of the men talked about the roles in the family as being fluid, and that both partners just do what needs to be done. Given that women often are socialized to be more organized and attuned to the needs of others, the question does arise, "if tasks are left to be done by the one who thinks of it first, does that result in the wife assuming more task responsibility?" The men in this sample were very clear about valuing reciprocity and fairness (as described in later sections); however, it seems relevant to acknowledge that even these power-sharing couples

were socialized in a gendered society and are certainly subject to internalized social norms even while actively working against them. Data from the participant's wives would be interesting here to fully understand how this role delineation happens. Further investigation also could determine whether the men were having a reaction to the words "actively negotiate" because they pride themselves in not needing to negotiate the roles: they are ready and willing to participate in all roles as needed. These men were comfortable, and even emphatic, when discussing the idea of negotiation more broadly, and specifically in the spheres of decision-making and financial expenditure, perhaps these are areas where these men are more accustomed to negotiation and possibly where conflict most often arises with their partners. Again, the idea of when and how negotiation happens could be further explored in future research.

The last point regarding the revision of the definition is the addition of: "mutual commitment to partners' career and employment status." This idea seemed to replace the idea of "mutual status in family," which did surface as a component of power-sharing, but not as a major component. It was very important to these men that there was acknowledgement that both partners' careers would be given equal attention and status. This additional aspect of the definition conveys mutual support for partners' career goals as well as the implication that the partners make employment decisions based on what works best for the family rather than based on gender. It seems possible that this addition also is, in part, a reaction to the general growth in dual income families and the practical concerns related to the economic realities that currently exist in the United States. Most of these men reside in an area

of the country where the cost of living is high. Therefore, many men reported that the two incomes were helpful, and in some cases, were necessary to maintain a particular standard of living. The observation by this researcher is not meant, in any way, to minimize the unique and admirable way these men operate in their marriages. In fact, the current economic realities make power-sharing all that more critical. When both partners are compelled to work for economic reasons, both partners should then be actively involved in all other aspects of the household, and both careers should be valued and share precedence. Based on the research cited earlier (Crosby, Williams and Biernat, 2004; Bianchi, 2000; Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer & Robinson, 2000; Milkie, Bianchi, Mattingly & Robinson, 2002; Ozer, 1995), one can assume that the general population of men living in this same area of the country, who share the same socioeconomic status as the power-sharing men in the study, are not sharing power with their wives, even when their wives are also working full-time.

Finally, of interest is that the majority of the participants believe that power-sharing is an ideology that could benefit all marriages, with some suggesting that the benefit expands to society at large. In addition, the majority of the men believe that power-sharing equates to marital happiness and success. This belief is supported by past research that states that occupying multiple roles and holding nontraditional gender role attitudes seems to predict well-being and marital health. Couples who eschew rigid gender roles and share roles repeatedly have reported higher levels of marital quality and relationship longevity (Johnson, 2003; Gottman, 1999, 2004; Gottman & Silver, 1999; Lavee and Katz, 2002). Specifically, researchers have found that husbands who are more liberal in their gender roles report positive marital quality

and minimize negative aspects of marriage (Amato & Booth, 1995; Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2006). The analysis of the data in the present study seems to support these findings.

How do these men believe their marital relationships  
compare to those of their peers?

It is noteworthy that these men consider themselves different than the “average man and father.” This acknowledgement of difference shows that these men recognize and are aware that they are not following social norms. They realize the unequal distribution of household labor and childcare in most dual-income families (and families in general). Most salient to these men was the way in which they are significantly more involved with their children than the “average man.” The participants spoke with pride about their own parental involvement and did not even try to disguise the negative judgment of other men who were significantly less involved at home.

Also interesting was the distance that they felt between themselves and the “average man.” The “average man” is not a friend of the men in this study. He is not even a colleague in most circumstances. The men in the study know the “average man” from the media and interact with the “average man” only as acquaintances: parents of their children’s friends, former classmates, clients, etc... The participants have actively chosen to surround themselves with men who similarly organize their lives. Although these men know they are non-traditional and generally different, this difference is not experienced on a regular basis because of the way in which they have chosen their social circle. Therefore, most of the men denied feeling negatively

judged by others for their non-traditional path. Past research would indicate that men in non-traditional roles are perceived as less instrumental and suffer low social regard (Ades & Fassinger, 2004; Brescoll and Uhlmann, 2005; Etaugh & Folger, 1998; Riggs 1997; 1998); however, because the men in this sample have chosen to associate predominantly with men like themselves, they seem immune to these negative perceptions. One might assume then that these men may have chosen a particular social circle, even before marriage, that would be supportive of the power-sharing approach. The fact that these men surround themselves predominantly with like-minded individuals undermines the influence they could have on those with opposing views and on social change more generally.

What are the internal facilitators of a men's engagement in a power-sharing relationship? What are the values, attitudes, and feelings that contribute to a man's engagement in this type of relationship?

As outlined when describing Construct 2, Values, in Chapter 4, the men in this study identified both societal and interpersonal values as motivators for power-sharing. All of the men but one described societal values, including equity, gender equality, justice and anti-discrimination, as contributing to their motivation. Past research on marital equality suggests that one facilitator of marital equality is partners being aware of gender inequity in society (Blaisure and Allen, 1995; Knudson-Martin and Mahoney, 2005). This finding seems consistent with the analysis of the interviews of the 13 men in this study where the above mentioned societal values were identified as motivating forces. Clearly, the men in this study are aware of

societal injustice, particularly gender discrimination, and have adopted values that prioritize and promote equality.

Many participants discussed these societal values with conviction. The manner in which these men described their societal value orientation seemed unique when compared to the general U.S. public; however, further research would be needed to confirm this assertion. Moreover, despite the fact that these men readily espoused values of equality and justice, the relationship between these values and the motivation to power-share seemed subconscious for some of the participants. Most of the men saw a connection between their societal values and their decision to engage in a power-sharing marriage; however, some made this connection only at the time of the interview. Before the interview, it was not a conscious process. A few others either denied a connection at all or were skeptical of a potential relationship between the two.

The reality that many of these men did not readily connect their social values to their power-sharing marriages was unexpected. In fact, the researcher expected these power-sharing men to be very aware of how their societal values motivated them to organize their marital relationships as egalitarian and power-sharing. Further, the expectation was that these men would espouse strong societal and political beliefs that would encourage them to think deeply and feel passionately about the sharing of power in their marriages. In general, these expectations were not met, which the researcher found surprising.

This lack of conscious awareness inspired questions about privileged groups in society, in this case, men. Is it possible that members of privileged groups may

recognize social injustice but not identify with it, and therefore, not relate it directly to their own lives? The participants grew up under the auspices of privilege and power (the majority of the participants were educated, middle-class, white men), and have not, for the most part, felt threatened personally by their environment because the environment generally has been safe and hospitable. Therefore, even though they embrace the values of justice, equity, gender equality and anti-discrimination, for some, their self-awareness of how these values impact daily life is low. This researcher hypothesizes that the spouses of these men may be more aware of how these values impact their personal lives because, as women, they are significantly more susceptible to gender inequality, inequity, discrimination, and injustice.

Past research suggests (and the current study supports) that when men are aware of gender discrimination and their own gender entitlement, marital equality becomes more of a true reality (Blaisure and Allen, 1995; Knudson-Martin and Mahoney, 2005). Therefore, increasing men's conscious awareness of how the societal values of equality and justice relate directly to heterosexual marriage seems critically important. Relatedly, it seems important to help men in society understand their own latent privilege and how this privilege may inadvertently keep them from consciously understanding and internalizing how gender inequity and discrimination affects their personal lives.

The men identified four interpersonal values as motivators for power-sharing: mutual respect, reciprocity, complex connection with partner, and family first. The men discussed valuing general mutual respect between individuals engaged in any interpersonal relationship. They also spoke specifically about their own marital

relationships and equated mutual respect with higher marital satisfaction and happiness.

Reciprocity, as a value, surfaced in multiple ways. First, many men discussed working as a “team” with their partners and mutually relying on one another for support. Others discussed reciprocity more as the unloading of a burden. In these cases, the men spoke about valuing a partner who could relieve them of responsibility or who would minimize expectations that the participant found unwieldy. In these cases, the men were implying reciprocal responsibility; however, their language emphasized the motivation to abdicate the burden of authority rather than emphasizing the sharing of authority. One wonders whether this aspect of the value of reciprocity is a reaction to male gender socialization and the way in which our society pressures men to assume the role of sole provider and “head of the household.” It is plausible that many of these men are reacting to male gender role stereotypes that are uncomfortable and seem unfair. Their simultaneously held societal value of equality may propel them to acquire this aspect of reciprocity as a way to secure their own equality in marital relationships. It seems important to remember that rigid gender roles affect both men and women, and actually for gender equality to become a reality, both men and women do need to free themselves from gendered expectations.

The men of this sample spoke openly about valuing a multi-faceted relationship with their partners. Many spoke about thriving on the ability to relate and communicate at every level with their spouses. Others discussed the abiding love and deep friendship they enjoy with their wives. Within this discussion, the men spoke about seeking advice and support from their wives. Many shared that this meaningful

connection with their partners was what they enjoyed best about their relationships. In a traditional marital relationship, husbands are less likely to accept their wife's influence or advice (Gottman & Silver, 1999). The literature suggests that when a man is open to learning from his wife, power struggles evaporate, and the marriage is more pleasurable and sustainable (Gottman & Silver, 1999). The fact that the men in this study were motivated by this value is not surprising given the evidence presented in past research: Men who value a complex relationship with a female partner are less likely to perpetuate power imbalance or gendered roles.

However, although these men respect the advice of their wives and consider them interesting and stimulating conversationalists, there was a sense that some of these men attributed their partner's ability to relate and have meaningful conversation to her employment status. The implication here is that women without careers are not interesting and cannot offer sound advice or support. Although these men are non-traditional in their attitudes toward their own partners, their language may reveal some stereotypic assumptions about women more generally. Is it fair to assume that women who do not work outside the home are less interesting or stimulating partners? Prior research on perceptions of men and women in different social roles supports that stay at home mothers are viewed as stereotypic women and as less competent and interesting (Ades & Fassinger, 2004; Etaugh & Folger, 1998; Riggs 1997; 1998). However, the research also shows that non-traditional men who work part-time or stay at home are viewed similarly incompetent and not ambitious (Ades & Fassinger, 2004; Etaugh & Folger, 1998; Riggs 1997; 1998). Further inquiry could

examine these perceptions among power-sharing men to decipher the specific meaning behind their responses.

One of the values that seemed to be most salient for the participants was putting family first. The prioritization of the family was a powerful motivator for the majority of these men and was the easiest for the participants to articulate. It was very clear that these men value a strong relationship with their family, particularly their children. Research shows that the majority of couples revert to a stereotyped division of labor after the birth of their children (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005). However, the men in this study espoused the opposite reaction: once their children were born, they intentionally became more involved in the family. These men actively pursue involvement in their children's lives and strive to be responsive to their families in every way. Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006) suggested that responsivity is what distinguishes engaged fathers from the average father who is engaged only peripherally with the care of their children.

Past research that examined father involvement also indicated that men are positively changed by their experiences with their children (Kimmel, 2004). The responses of the men in this study support this assertion. These men were confident in their abilities to parent effectively and compassionately, and they cited the relationship with their children as the greatest reward of the power-sharing marriage.

#### How did these facilitators develop?

Chapter 4 described the contextual influences that theoretically stimulated the acquisition of the values described above. Based on the emerging theory, these values, in turn, inspired the men in this sample to engage in a power-sharing

marriage. The identified influences were: education, community, sociopolitical context and family of origin.

The results of the present study suggest that college was a time of self-awareness and identity formation for many of the men in this study. Chickering (1969) suggested that the college experience can affect students emotionally, socially, physically and intellectually, especially as it relates to the formation of identity, which was indeed supported in the current study. In addition, past research suggests that highly educated individuals are more critical of traditional gender roles and are more likely to have learned about gender discrimination and injustice in society (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005; Zimmerman, Haddock, Current & Ziemba, 2003). This fact certainly held true in the sample of men interviewed for this study. All of the men were college educated, and all but one hold advanced degrees. Many of the men shared that college was a time of self-exploration, self-growth and rebelling against the status quo. Through the academic environment, these men accrued information about social injustice and were given tools to critically evaluate society.

The implication of this finding is that if this type of education was provided earlier in development (middle school-high school), more young boys and men would be exposed to issues of gender diversity and would have the means to critically analyze the world in which they live. The results of this study also firmly support the requirement for diversity courses at the college level. The men of the study directly relate this type of academic inquiry to their development of core values that inspired their path toward a power-sharing marriage.

A high-level of educational attainment also provides individuals with career and employment choices that less educated individuals are not afforded. In addition, education may instill more confidence in the employment arena. Therefore, it becomes easier to choose a non-traditional path and trust that there will be a satisfactory outcome.

The other environmental variables of community and sociopolitical context seemed influential in the formation of values for the 13 men in this study. Religious communities where leaders and members openly advocated for justice and equality had a significant impact on the lives of these men. Also influential were neighborhoods where the majority of the residents were extreme on either end of the ideological spectrum from liberal to conservative. These men also reported that friends who challenged gendered expectations or who espoused particular ideological beliefs were also influential in their development. Finally, exposure to political ideology during formative years and an early understanding of the sociopolitical context were influential in values development.

The most salient influence for the men of this study seemed to be the experiences and behaviors of their family of origin. Since the family of origin emerged as a primary source of value development, relevant literature was sought in order to consider how the findings of the present study compared with that of past research. Unfortunately, a thorough search of the literature resulted in little information about the impact of family of origin on the development of marital equality. Most of the previous literature investigating parental influence on gender-role attitudes has examined general dimensions of masculinity and femininity and has

neglected the more specific views toward marital and parental roles. However, Stephan & Corder (1985) suggested that it is children of dual-career families who are most likely to aspire to dual-career families. Similarly, Henry and Hampton (1992) found that young adults whose parents eschewed traditional gendered behavior were more likely to choose non-traditional paths. However, these results do not seem to directly support the findings of the present study. Most of the men in this study described their family of origin as traditional; yet, the participants pursued a very non-traditional path. Most participants suggested that they recognized the gendered division in their families or origin and consciously wanted a more egalitarian marriage than their parents.

Past research also indicates that there is a stronger influence on gender role attitudes by the same-sex parent (Arditti, Godwin and Scanzoni, 1991; Snyder, Velasquez & Clark, 1997). This finding seems somewhat relevant to the experiences shared by the men in this study since the men in the study seemed far more influenced by their fathers' behaviors than their mothers. Specifically, all the men in the study seemed to be influenced by their fathers' involvement in the family. Past research suggests that children are more likely to learn and adopt *similar* gender role attitudes of their same-sex parent (Arditti, Godwin and Scanzoni, 1991; Snyder, Velasquez & Clark, 1997). The majority of the men in this study were rejecting of their fathers' traditional gendered behaviors. The influence seemed to be in the reverse – the men of this study developed different gender-role attitudes than their fathers and most of these men consciously strive to differ from husbands and fathers. However, it seems equally salient that the men in this study who described their fathers as non-

traditional or as involved in the family wanted to emulate their fathers and organize their families similarly to that of their parents.

Father involvement seemed to be a powerful influence for the men in this study both if the fathers were only minimally involved or if they were very involved. The participants reported either wanting to be different than their fathers or similar to their fathers. Most American men who grew up in the same generation as the men in this study probably had parents with a traditional marriage. In addition, they likely either had fathers who were minimally involved or who were very involved. However, most American men do not power-share. Although the participants spoke in detail about their families of origin, a thorough comparison of the participants' families of origin and that of their peers was not examined. Therefore, it is possible that the men of this study came from families that were more liberal or open than the majority of families despite the fact that the mothers and fathers occupied traditional roles. Future research could focus on the family of origin in order to identify specific patterns of similarity that may exist in the families of origin of power-sharing men.

What are some external factors that facilitate a man's engagement  
in a power-sharing relationship?

The external factor that was the most influential power-sharing facilitator was workplace flexibility. The majority of these men described a workplace where there were either formal or informal policies that made power-sharing a possible reality. The men discussed deliberately choosing their jobs to ensure workplace flexibility and a family friendly atmosphere. Interestingly, some of these men shared that their workplaces were more family-friendly than their wives' workplaces. It seems as

though these men felt very limited by workplace options that would allow for male employees to have flexibility. They sought out those options and those options alone. The fact that these men had these job and career options speaks to their high level of educational attainment. Education promotes choices and thus flexible schedules for these men. Without the advantage of high education, one wonders if these men would be able to create and/or find such flexible job options or if employers would be as likely to trust flexible schedules.

What are the obstacles or barriers power-sharing men have encountered  
in committing to this type of relationship?

Many of the costs of power-sharing reported by the men in this sample seem to mirror the challenges historically expressed by women in the multiple roles literature. This past research has pointed to the competing and incessant demands as an overwhelming challenge of the work-family interface (e.g., Milkie & Peltola, 1999). This challenge is certainly consistent with the reports of the men in this study. Hochschild (1997) illustrates that working women feel “stretched to the limit” when trying to accommodate work and family demands. Again, this was a sentiment expressed by many of the men in this study. In addition, historically, the work-family literature, which has focused on women, has identified feelings of guilt – where the woman feels guilty about lack of adequate attention to either sphere, work or home (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). This guilt was also expressed by the men of this study. It is interesting how men, who are in non-traditional roles, seem to experience a similar strain to that of their female counterparts. It is important to note that where there are certainly costs and struggles involved in multiple roles, the men also expressed

fulfillment and satisfaction with maintaining both roles. The fact that the work-family interface is both a source of joy and strain is consistent with the newer expansionist theory of multiple roles for both men and women (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003). Ignoring the challenges is problematic; however, ignoring the benefits is also problematic.

Another salient challenge these men identified was the difficulty in career advancement as well as a decrease in earning potential. Many men in this study suggested that one explanation for their lower wages compared to male peers is the result of not working a 50 hour work week. This perception has been supported in past research (e.g., Barnett & Rivers, 1996; Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003; Galinsky, 1999) that argues that until institutions and cultural ideologies change to fit the new dual-earner family, couples will continue to face obstacles, such as the expectation that one will work a 50-hour work week, which is nearly 4 hours longer than 20 years ago and is a longer work week than people in any other country in the world (Coontz, 2000). In addition, workplace norms generally continue to be structured around the assumption that employees have a full-time adult at home who takes care of all the non-paid labor.

Findings of a recent study support the fact that egalitarian-oriented men suffer wage penalties (Judge & Livingston, 2008). The results indicate that men with traditional gender role attitudes enjoy higher wage premiums than all other workers, even in today's workforce of roughly equal participation rates of men and women. Specifically, traditional men are provided with strong earnings advantages over non-traditional male counterparts – even when controlling for variables such as work

hours, job complexity and occupational segregation. Judge and Livingston (2008) suggest that traditional men may be more competitive salary negotiators. Another theory is that employers see egalitarian men as less capable or that employers are uncomfortable with individuals who defy stereotypic behavior. This wage disparity certainly supports the claims of the men in the present study; however, it seems possible that the disparity is due to more than number of hours worked or occupational choices as the participants suggested.

The men in this study did deny experiencing negative attitudes of others regarding their power-sharing approach and implied that those individuals with whom they have the most contact are actually very supportive. However, these men also discussed feeling limited in their workplace options and generally felt as though the chances of career advancement were low. In addition, they talked about peers who were earning greater amounts of money in similar careers. They also acknowledged feelings of inadequacy related to decreased earnings. Therefore, it seems likely that these men do experience societal pressure and do struggle with their non-traditional choices. In addition, the jobs they reportedly didn't pursue or turned down likely had employers or employees with whom the male participant felt unaccepted or potentially threatened. Therefore, there is some incongruence when the participants deny experiencing negative reactions, yet, at the same time, suggest that there are work environments where they feel unsupported. In addition, the participants generally described a U.S. workforce climate that is not accepting of non-traditional men.

The fact that the power-sharing men who participated in this study are not able to advance in their careers means that they are less likely to be in positions to change institutional policy. In order to change the cultural norms in U.S. society, those who advocate non-traditional roles need to assume positions of power. These men not only are unable to advance but they also only choose workplaces where family friendly policies are firmly in place. Therefore, these power-sharing men are not visible in society and are not yielding positions of power where social change can be implemented.

#### Limitations and Strengths of the Current Study

This section discusses the limitations and strengths of the present study, with limitations discussed first, followed by the strengths of the study. Many of the limitations of the present study are inherent to one degree or another in all qualitative research. As with all qualitative research, one limitation is the lack of generalizability. Since the findings of any qualitative inquiry are not assumed to generalize outside the studied sample, the results of the present investigation may or may not be applicable to other men. Therefore, future research might include quantitative methodology in order to test the theoretical framework posited here. The present study may be viewed as a stimulus and guide for future research.

Limitations caused by research bias are inherent in qualitative research. It is important to note that the results of the present investigation were bound by the biases of the researchers, particularly the primary researcher. The researcher began this endeavor with expectations and biases based on her experiences as a feminist scholar, wife and mother of two small children. The researcher was influenced by her own

marriage that she believes represents a power-sharing partnership. She expected the men she interviewed to be similar to her own husband in motivations, interests, values and preferences. In addition, as an individual who believes that the personal is political, the researcher expected to find significant political interest among the participants particularly regarding the current sociopolitical context and how it relates to their own personal lives and values. Finally, the researcher expected these men to be passionate about power-sharing and consciously aware of how their relationships differ from the conventional marriage.

It is interesting to note that many of the researcher's expectations were not supported by the data gathered in the interviews with the 13 men. The researcher was surprised that many of the men described their experiences and relationships in very practical terms. The narratives of these men often lacked the passion that was expected. In addition, it was unexpected that the men lacked an active awareness of how the sociopolitical context as well as their own social values impacted their marital relationships and choices. Another surprise was that the men repeatedly emphasized parenting and even conflated fathering with power-sharing. Relatedly, it was surprising how little the participants discussed the sharing of power in regard to their relationship with their partner – independent of their children.

The researchers were vigilant in instituting strategies to minimize bias, which may be reflected in the fact the much of the data did not fit the researcher's expectations. However, it is also likely that these biases did affect the analysis of the data. All research team members were female, which also could also produce bias in the analysis of the data. Male research team members were actively recruited;

however, scheduling did not permit participation among the interested undergraduate men. Furthermore, all interviews were conducted by the primary researcher, which was intentional (discussed in the Method chapter); however, it is possible that the primary researcher's biases and preconceived expectations may have guided the focus of the interview. In addition, the fact that the primary researcher is a woman and all the participants are men could be a limitation to this study, although this was a purposeful design (discussed in the Methods chapter). It is plausible that the men responded to a female researcher differently than they would have with a male researcher. There is a possibility that information was withheld and/or provided in a skewed way as to manage the cross-gender dialogue.

Qualitative research suggests that data can be gathered through multiple sources and by re-contacting/re-interviewing participants throughout data analysis. One limitation of the present study is that data were collected by using one source (the participants). Future research might include interviewing the participant's spouse or even friends. In addition, data were gathered at primarily one point in time (the interview). The participants were re-contacted only when they were asked to validate their transcripts. It seems as though it may have been fruitful to re-interview participants to compare new data against original data, to clarify or strengthen a category, and/or to ask entirely new questions that may have emerged from analysis of the data.

The present study also was limited by inherent demand characteristics where participants easily could form an interpretation of the purpose of the research and unconsciously change their behavior and responses accordingly. In this study, the

men knew that the construct of interest was the power-sharing marriage and could assume that the researcher views power-sharing as a positive phenomenon. Therefore, the participants could have perceived social desirability of response and thus responded in ways in which they believed were desired, expected, and/or valued.

The homogeneity of the sample, while intentional, may have produced a cohort effect. For example, all the men in the sample were parents. It would be interesting to discover what power-sharing means and looks like for couples without children. Clearly, many of the men in the study found parenting to be central to the power-sharing phenomenon. In fact, active parenting was sometimes confused with power-sharing as a general concept. In other words, the men seemed to occasionally equate power-sharing with involved parenting or fathering; therefore, there was an inherent confound that may have skewed the analysis of the data. Theoretically, power-sharing can exist without children, and the homogeneity of this sample makes it impossible to understand if and how power-sharing differs for men without children. Perhaps further and more thorough examination of the literature on father involvement (e.g., Tamis-LeMonda, C.S. & Cabrera, N., 2002) would help illuminate whether power-sharing and involved fathering are the same or separate constructs. Fathering seemed to dominate much of the interviews with these men; therefore, it is critical to understand all facets of father involvement.

The sample was also made up of predominantly White, highly educated, middle-class men. It is plausible that the power-sharing journey may vary widely by culture and/or race. There was one African American participant, and his interview did seem distinct from the others, particularly in his discussion of his family of origin

and the community in which he grew up. Socioeconomic status is another variable that was similar across participants. It was intentional to recruit a population of men who were of a socioeconomic class where power-sharing was a definitive choice. However, the discussion presented here excludes working class men who power-share by choice and does not include how their experiences are similar or different to the men of this sample.

In addition, given that the men, for the most part, self-selected into the study, there may be unique characteristics about a group of men who self-select to participate in a study about power-sharing marriage. Also, many of these men's wives strongly encouraged them to participate in the research. Therefore, there may be something unique about the men who were convinced by their wives to participate. Finally, all of these men reside in the same geographic location which makes them unique in another way, and the specific geographic location may have relevance to their power-sharing relationships. Future research could examine more variables within this type of homogenous sample to aid in the understanding of this group of men.

Finally, another perspective on the homogeneity of the sample may be that it was not homogeneous enough. For example, it is possible that power-sharing is viewed and executed differently for first-time parents versus parents with young children versus parents with school-age or older children. Years of marriage may be another influencing factor, just as the number of children residing in the home also may be a relevant factor.

Despite numerous limitations, there were also significant strengths of the present study. The methodology was carefully designed to elicit and capture the lived experiences of the power-sharing men who participated in the study. In addition, a series of deliberate strategies were implemented in order to minimize bias and thus to increase trustworthiness. For example, multiple researchers from varying backgrounds analyzed data, a number of auditors reviewed the process, and the emergent theory repeatedly was compared to the interview data to ensure that it accurately reflected the experiences of the men in this study.

Another strength of the present study is that the theoretical framework articulated here adds a new dimension to the existing literature. There is research that has examined marital equality as an entity or an outcome, but there is a lack of research that examines the precursors to marital equality. Little is known about the influential experiences and the values of those individuals who choose to share power in their marital relationships. The current study sheds light on these variables. In addition, much of the literature on gender role attitudes, dual-career families, and multiple roles has focused on women. This study is unique in that it captures the lived experiences of men. In addition, feminist research has often focused on the power differential between men and women and has focused on the conflict between men and women. The current project is unique as it shifts the discussion from the examination of conflict toward the understanding of possible resolution. By studying the group with the power, one can better understand how to increase the sharing of power and ultimately neutralize the power imbalance. As already mentioned, in order for women to achieve equality, men have to broaden their social roles as well. In

order to intervene and promote non-traditional roles for men, it is imperative first to understand their unique experiences.

The current study also has produced an emergent model that can be tested easily with quantitative methods in order to refine the developmental stages posited here. In addition, from the data analysis, new and thought-provoking questions emerged that can be studied both quantitatively as well as qualitatively. The researcher hopes that the results of the present study and the subsequent emergent theory stimulate additional focused research and interventions related to the power-sharing marital relationship.

#### Implication for Future Research and Practice

Although a number of implications for research and practice have been presented throughout the presentation and discussion of results, additional implications also are mentioned here. It is the hope of the primary researcher that this study will have heuristic value and that it will stimulate a series of future research.

#### *Research*

The findings of the current study enrich our understanding of the phenomena of power-sharing marital relationships. Future study could further explicate and refine the dimensions of the emergent theory proposed in this study. Through quantitative analysis each developmental stage outlined in the theory could be tested, variables could be verified or refuted, and new variables could emerge. This analysis could help target and focus social interventions.

There are many ideas for future research. One idea builds upon the current study by involving both partners in the interview process. It would be particularly interesting to interview partners separately and together. The focus could remain on the man in the couple or it could examine both the partners' journeys that lead to a power-sharing marriage. This type of research illuminates potential differences between male and female experiences and it could identify common themes among the couples that promote power-sharing. Also interesting in this analysis, or in a separate project, would be the examination of the unconscious ideology and its relationship to power and privilege posited earlier in this chapter. The research questions of interest would be, how do men's responses vary depending on recognition of latent power and privilege; and how do men and women respond differently when examined through the lens of privilege?

Given that qualitative methodology was employed in this research, there was no comparison group or "control" group with which to examine the results. It would be interesting to examine men more generally and explore how their experiences and behaviors compare to the identified power-sharing men of this study. For example, how do the early influences and values acquisition of more traditional men compare? Also interesting would be an examination of the "average man" to whom so many of the men in this study referred. Who is the average man, and how do his experiences compare to the power-sharing men of this study?

In the present study, the participant men described the characteristics of their partners; however, they were never asked to describe themselves. Comparing these characteristics certainly would have been illuminating. In general, the present study

lacked examination of personality variables, which is a potential limitation to this inquiry. It seems plausible, given what is known about dual-earner families, that another man could have experienced the same type of influences, acquired the same types of values, and not have chosen a power-sharing partner or marriage. The question then arises, what is unique about the personalities of these men that enabled them to eschew social norms and to ignore the negative perceptions of others? The same question could be examined of the partners of these men.

Further, an examination of power-sharing men who do not have children would be illuminating and important in distinguishing whether parenthood is a separate construct or whether power-sharing as it was defined here can exist prior to the birth of children. Investigation focusing on separate racial/ethnic groups of power-sharing men also seems important for comparison purposes.

In the search for information about the impact of family of origin on marital choices and partner selection, it became clear that there is a dearth of information on this subject. Most of the prior research has focused on the impact of the parent's masculinity and femininity. These were not even variables of mention in the present study. The participants focused almost solely on their parent's attitudes and behaviors. Since the family of origin seemed to have a significant impact on the lives of the men in this study, this avenue of study seems critical to fully understanding the trajectory of these men.

### *Practice*

The results of the current project have significant implications for the counseling endeavor. First, counselors can empower male clients to challenge their

own gender socialization and broaden their roles. Counselors can empathize with the pressures and demands men experience based on gendered expectations and can support non-traditional choices as a way to increase satisfaction. The men in this study often expressed feelings of inadequacy or low self-concept based on their struggle to advance in their careers. Counselors could help these men better understand the influence of the sociopolitical context on their perceptions of self. Perhaps the counselor, even a career counselor, could inspire these men to continue to fight for career advancement by challenging workplace assumptions or by pursuing jobs that may seem not to be family friendly. Although this could be risky, if men severely limit where they think they can work successfully, broader change is impossible. These men are the ones who could effect real social change within the workforce.

Counselors who work with couples can utilize this research to help with marital satisfaction. The majority of the men in this sample suggest that marital happiness is related to power-sharing. This assertion has been supported by previous research. Promoting general flexibility of role attitudes and negotiation skills can help the couple delineate role patterns that best suite their own relationship needs. As past research has shown, men report satisfaction with increased involvement in the home and women report higher stress and unhappiness when men are not contributing at home. Therefore, it seems as though both partners benefit when couples are encouraged to consider the power-sharing ideology.

*Policy and Advocacy*

One of the most straightforward findings of this research was that workplace policies and workplace climate are strong facilitators for the power-sharing marriage. Flexible hours, job sharing, telecommuting, and compressed work schedules were all cited by the men in this study as policies that help them maintain a successful power-sharing marriage. Advocacy on behalf of these policies is critical; however, possibly even more critical is reminding employers that these policies and programs should be offered to both male and female employees. The fact that most employers and employees consider these policies only for women minimizes the power women have in the workplace and certainly lessens the possibility that men will pursue or engage in these policy options.

Advocates can work with employers to help them understand the changing nature of the workforce now that the majority of families are dual-income. This education is essential as is the information about how employers can benefit if they offer flexible policies to all employees, men and women. The obvious benefit to an employer is the ability to accommodate essential employees who have trouble balancing their jobs and their families. In order to retain those employees, it is in the company's best interests to allow its staff to have a flexible schedule. Flexible hours (including starting and quitting times, compressed work weeks, part-time schedules -- even working at home for part of the scheduled work day in some jobs) have been shown in many research projects to contribute to both higher productivity and more satisfied workers (Eaton, 2003).

Many employers are beginning to offer flexible work options. However, these options are marketed to female employees – current employees and perspective employees. It is imperative that there is a shift in the way these programs and work options are discussed within a company and certainly how they are marketed outside the company. These options should not be bound by gender and all materials related to these offerings should contain gender neutral or gender inclusive language. This is critical to creating a workplace climate that is promoting and accepting of non-traditional options for male employees.

Further, diversity training may have a role to play in addressing erroneous beliefs about who does and can benefit from flexible work policies. Often diversity training addresses the potential gender bias in employees and employers perceptions of ability. This training typically is focused on changing the perception that women are not qualified or capable of leadership. Perhaps this diversity training also should address the rigidity in gender socialization for men and dismiss the bias that men cannot nurture or care for the family the same way women can. In addition, this workplace sponsored diversity program could encourage men to consider flexible workplace options.

Public education is needed to reduce the gendered expectations of men and women in our society. The results of this study imply that when men are exposed to or learn about gender inequity, they are more likely to embrace non-traditional options. This education needs to be more broadly addressed in the national public school system and internalized by young people. Specific campaigns geared to boys and young men may help encourage men to explore non-traditional role options.

The power-sharing men of this study are invisible to the society at large because they choose to associate predominantly with like-minded individuals. Their voices are needed to change policy and promote social change. They are their own strongest advocates. Therefore, support systems are needed to help these men organize and use their power to influence others.

### Conclusion

The goal of this study was to gain a clearer understanding of the lives of men who choose to engage in power-sharing marital relationships. Women's equality is dependent on men broadening their social roles and sharing and relinquishing some of their power. This researcher is committed to scholarly endeavors that challenge rigid gender socialization for both men and women and that contribute to neutralizing the uneven balance of power that often occurs in heterosexual marital relationships. This investigation has broken new ground by examining a population who traditionally holds the power in order to create social change that benefits populations with less power. The primary investigator will be forever grateful to the men who participated in this study and allowed her a window into their lives. This inquiry has led to some discovery of how to promote social change and has certainly revealed numerous possibilities for further academic inquiry. The evolving theory presented here does aid in the understanding of the path taken by these power-sharing men. These findings will be a unique and meaningful addition to existing literature.

## Appendix A: Recruitment Materials

### Recruitment E-mail: (Synagogue and Community list-serves)

Dear all:

Community help would be appreciated in completing a study we are doing at the University of Maryland. Specifically, we need your guidance in identifying eligible participants for our study. The research topic is an understudied population of husbands and fathers. With the influx of women into the labor market, many scholars have been motivated to study the psychological health and well-being of women. We have decided to take a novel approach and study men!

Specifically, we are looking for fathers/husbands engaged in what we are calling “power-sharing marital relationships.” The broad definition of a power-sharing marriage used here is: Marriages where partners hold mutual status, actively negotiate roles, share decision-making and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks.

To be eligible, participant fathers/husbands need to agree with the following six statements:

- 1) My partner (spouse) and I share child care and household tasks.
- 2) My partner and I do not consciously divide roles or tasks based on gender.
- 3) My partner and I both have access to and influence over family finances.
- 4) My partner and I both freely express our opinions and needs when negotiating family decisions.
- 5) My partner and I mutually respect and value each other’s professional pursuits.
- 6) Neither my partner nor I describe our familial identity as “head of the household.”

Additionally eligibility requirements for participants:

- 1) Participant fathers/husbands must be in a heterosexual marriage of at least five years.
- 2) Participant fathers/husbands must have children ten years old or younger living with them full-time in the home.
- 3) Both participant father/husband and his partner (spouse) need to be employed outside the home a minimum of twenty hours per week.

Eligible participants will be invited to participate in a 10-20 minute phone interview. Additionally, some participants will be invited to participate in a second 45-60 minute in-person interview at a mutually agreed upon location.

**IF YOU MEET THESE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY, PLEASE CONTACT LISA ADES AT: [lades@umd.edu](mailto:lades@umd.edu) or 301-637-5890**

**IF YOU KNOW OF SOMEONE WHO MEETS THESE CRITERIA, PLEASE FORWARD THIS REQUEST ALONG. PLEASE DISTRIBUTE WIDELY – TO ALL SOURCES YOU BELIEVE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE!**

Thank you,

Lisa Ades, M.A.  
University of Maryland, College Park  
Counseling & Personnel Services  
301-637-5890

Ruth Fassinger, Ph.D.  
University of Maryland, College Park  
Counseling & Personnel Services  
301-405-2858

### Recruitment E-mail

(“Moms” list-serves – DC Urban Moms and Silver Spring Moms)

Dear Moms:

Your help is needed to complete a study we are doing at the University of Maryland. We need your guidance in identifying eligible participants for our study. The research topic is an understudied population of **fathers**. With the influx of women into the labor market, many scholars have been motivated to study the psychological health and well-being of mothers. We have decided to take a novel approach and study fathers!

Specifically, we are looking for fathers/husbands engaged in what we are calling “power-sharing marital relationships.” The broad definition of a power-sharing marriage used here is: Marriages where partners hold mutual status, actively negotiate roles, share decision-making and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks.

If you feel as though this definition fits your marriage, please nominate your husband to participate! This is a great opportunity to help other couples figure out how to create an equal partnership in marriage. So, please encourage your husband or other husbands you know to participate in this important study!

To be eligible, participant husbands/fathers need to agree with the following six statements:

- 1) My partner (spouse) and I share child care and household tasks.
- 2) My partner and I do not consciously divide roles or tasks based on gender.
- 3) My partner and I both have access to and influence over family finances.
- 4) My partner and I both freely express our opinions and needs when negotiating family decisions.
- 5) My partner and I mutually respect and value each other’s professional pursuits.
- 6) Neither my partner nor I describe our familial identity as “head of the household.”

Additionally eligibility requirements for participants:

- 4) Participant fathers/husbands must be in a heterosexual marriage of at least five years.
- 5) Participant fathers/husbands must have children ten years old or younger living with them full-time in the home.
- 6) Both participant father/husband and his partner (spouse) need to be employed outside the home a minimum of twenty hours per week.

Eligible participants will be invited to participate in a 10-20 minute phone interview. Additionally, some participants will be invited to participate in a second 45-60 minute in-person interview at a mutually agreed upon location.

**IF YOUR HUSBAND MEETS THESE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, PLEASE ENCOURAGE HIM TO CONTACT LISA ADES AT: [lades@umd.edu](mailto:lades@umd.edu) or 301-637-5890. OR, IF YOU KNOW A MAN WHO MEETS THESE CRITERIA, PLEASE FORWARD THIS REQUEST TO HIM ALONG WITH YOUR ENDORSEMENT OF HIS PARTICIPATION.**

PLEASE DISTRIBUTE THIS REQUEST WIDELY – TO ALL SOURCES YOU BELIEVE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE!

Thank you,  
Lisa Ades, M.A.  
University of Maryland, College Park  
Counseling & Personnel Services  
301-637-5890

Ruth Fassinger, Ph.D.  
University of Maryland, College Park  
Counseling & Personnel Services  
301-405-2858

## Recruitment Flyer

**Participants are needed for a groundbreaking study of FATHERS**

Specifically looking for fathers/husbands who are in “power-sharing marriages”: where partners hold mutual status, actively negotiate roles, share decision-making and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks

## Eligibility Requirements:

Participants need to agree with the following six statements:

- 1) My partner (spouse) and I share child care and household tasks.
- 2) My partner and I do not consciously divide roles or tasks based on gender.
- 3) My partner and I both have access to and influence over family finances.
- 4) My partner and I both freely express our opinions and needs when negotiating family decisions.
- 5) My partner and I mutually respect and value each other’s professional pursuits.
- 6) Neither my partner nor I describe our familial identity as “head of the household.”

Additional eligibility requirements include:

- 1) Participant fathers/husbands must be in a heterosexual marriage of at least five years.
- 2) Participant fathers/husbands must have children ten years old or younger living with them full time in the home.
- 3) Both participant father/husband and his partner (spouse) need to be employed outside the home a minimum of twenty hours per week.

*Eligible participants will be invited to participate in a 10-20 minute phone interview. Additionally, some participants will be invited to participate in a second 45-60 minute in-person interview at a mutually agreed upon location.*

**IF YOU MEET THESE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY, PLEASE CONTACT LISA ADES AT: [lades@wam.umd.edu](mailto:lades@wam.umd.edu) or 301-637-5890**

**IF YOU KNOW OF SOMEONE WHO MEETS THESE CRITERIA, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO FORWARD THIS REQUEST ALONG. PLEASE DISTRIBUTE THIS REQUEST WIDELY – TO ALL SOURCES YOU BELIEVE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE!**

**Lisa Ades, M.A.  
University of Maryland, College Park  
Counseling & Personnel Services  
301-637-5890**

**Ruth Fassinger, Ph.D.  
University of Maryland, College Park  
Counseling & Personnel Services  
301-405-2858**

## Appendix B: Screening Instrument

(Introduction & Verbal Consent) I'd like to thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to interview you. This phone interview should last 10-20 minutes. I will be asking you about your ideas of what it means to be in a power-sharing relationship; in addition, I will ask questions related to your family routine and organization as well as household management. All your responses will be kept completely confidential. The only exception to this confidentiality is if you disclose information about child abuse or neglect or potential harm to yourself or others. A subset of participants who I am interviewing by phone will also be asked to continue participation in an in-person interview. Your participation is completely voluntary. Do I have your permission to continue with the interview now or potentially at a later point in time?

- 1) For this research project, we are interviewing men who identify as power-sharing. Since you have self-identified this way, I am curious what power-sharing means to you. What comes to your mind when I say "power-sharing relationship"?

Now I am going to ask you a few questions that relate directly to your behaviors and role as father and as spouse.

- 2) Most families have regular routines in both the morning and in the evening. Can you describe to me your family's morning and evening routines and your role in both?
- 3) When your child is sick, how do you and your spouse determine who is going to stay home with him or her?
- 4) What is your child's favorite meal?
- 5) After your youngest child was born, did you take time off work? If so, how much time did you take off? Describe how you spent that time.
- 6) How does your home get cleaned and organized?
- 7) How do your children get to and from daycare or school?
- 8) How do you spend your leisure time? What about your spouse?
- 9) How would you describe your spouse's career goals and aspirations?

Finally,

- 10) We have defined a power-sharing relationship as one where partners hold mutual status, actively negotiate roles, share decision-making and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks. What are your thoughts about this definition?

[IF RESPONDENT IS INELIGIBLE]: Thank you very much for your time. The answers you have provided are sufficient for our purposes, so this will end your participation in the study. If you should have any questions, feel free to contact me at 301-637-5890. Thank you again.

[IF RESPONDENT IS ELIGIBLE]: Thank you very much for your time. The next step in the process is an in-person interview that is expected to last 45-60 minutes. I would like to schedule that now. We can meet either at your home or at a public place. (scheduling will proceed). Before our meeting I would like to send you some information, via regular or e-mail, for you to review (obtain address).

## Appendix C: Statement of Informed Consent

**CONSENT FORM****Facilitators of Men's Engagement in Power-Sharing Marital Relationships**

You must be over 18 years of age to participate in this research project. The project is being conducted by Ms. Lisa Ades and Dr. Ruth Fassinger in the Department of Counseling and Personnel Services at the University of Maryland, College Park.

This project will examine the lives and experiences of husbands and fathers who self-identify as power-sharing. For the purposes of this study, the definition of a power-sharing marital relationship is: Marriages where partners hold mutual status, actively negotiate roles, share decision-making and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks.

The procedure involves completion of a brief demographic questionnaire and a 45-60 minute in-depth interview with the primary researcher. Participants will be asked about family roles and decision-making; family history; thoughts, feelings and attitudes about power-sharing in marriage; and external factors that may influence power-sharing in marriage. Participants can refuse to answer any question in the demographic questionnaire and/or at the in-person interview.

The interview will be audiotaped and subsequently transcribed for the purposes of data collection and analysis only. Transcription will be completed by the primary researcher, research assistants and professional transcribers. However, only the primary researcher will have access to any identifying information; the other transcribers will have access to the audiotape alone. To protect confidentiality, participants will be asked to refrain from including identifying information in their responses to interview questions. However, if such information is inadvertently recorded, the interviewer will flag that interview, will transcribe that interview herself and will exclude the identifying information from transcription. Everything recorded on tape will be kept confidential and responses will not be tied to individuals in any way. Throughout the duration of the research project, the audiotapes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and will then be destroyed at the completion of the research project. The research relies on analyzing the transcripts of the interview; therefore, participants who refuse to be audiotaped will not be able to participate in the research project.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

You may be re-contacted after the interview if any clarification of your answers is necessary.

\_\_\_\_ I agree to be re-contacted after the interview.

\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to be re-contacted after the interview.

In addition, the researchers plan to mail you a copy of the final written transcript of your interview so that you have the opportunity to review and/or amend your transcript. The transcript will be mailed to an address that you specify at your interview. You should be aware that there is the risk that the transcript may be read by your spouse or another person in the residence who has contact with the incoming mail.

\_\_\_\_ I agree to have a copy of the final interview transcript sent to the address I specify.

\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to have a copy of the final interview transcript sent to the address I specify.

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, audiotapes, personal identification and all resulting data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet accessible only by the student researcher and her faculty advisor. All responses will be disconnected from personal information. Audiotapes will be destroyed at the completion of the research project. For the most part, the data from all participants will be aggregated for reporting and presentation purposes. Direct individual quotations from interviews may also be used for reporting or presenting purposes. These written quotations will not be linked to participants' names or any other identifying information. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others.

There are no known risks associated with participating in this project. The research is not designed to help you personally, but to help the investigators learn more about the facilitators that encourage fathers to engage in power sharing marital relationships. Participation in the interview may provide you with an opportunity for self-reflection. The researcher can provide you with appropriate referrals if you should want to discuss your reflections with a professional.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time.

Should you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact Dr. Ruth Fassinger, Ph.D.; University of Maryland, College Park; Department of Counseling and Personnel Services; 301-405-2858; rfassing@umd.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678. This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Your signature indicates that:

- you are at least 18 years of age;
- the research has been explained to you;
- your questions have been fully answered; and
- you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Demographics

*Please provide as much information as you can and are comfortable. You can refrain from answering any question included in this questionnaire.*

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Please indicate the number of years you have been married: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Race/Ethnicity (check one; if not listed, indicate in appropriate box):
  - \_\_\_\_\_ African American/Black
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Arab/Middle Eastern American
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Asian American/Pacific Islander
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian/EuroAmerican
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic or Latino/a
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Native American/American Indian
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Multiracial (indicate): \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other (indicate): \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Education (check highest level completed):
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Some grammar school (less than 8<sup>th</sup> grade)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Some high school
  - \_\_\_\_\_ High school degree
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Some college
  - \_\_\_\_\_ College degree
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Some graduate work
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate degree: Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Current yearly income – select category:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ \$0
  - \_\_\_\_\_ \$1 - \$10,000
  - \_\_\_\_\_ \$10,001 - \$50,000
  - \_\_\_\_\_ \$50,001 - \$100,000
  - \_\_\_\_\_ \$100,001 - \$200,000
  - \_\_\_\_\_ \$200,001 - \$500,000
  - \_\_\_\_\_ \$500,001 +
  
6. Current profession and job title: \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. How many hours per week do you work? \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. How many hours per week does your spouse work? \_\_\_\_\_
  
9. Number of dependent children and ages: \_\_\_\_\_
  
10. Are you politically affiliated? If so, to which political party do you identify?  
 Democrat \_\_\_ Independent \_\_\_ Republican \_\_\_ Other\_\_\_(Please specify\_\_\_\_\_)

## Appendix E: Interview Protocol

(Informed Consent and Introduction): I'd like to thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to interview you. I will be taping this interview for the purposes of data collection and analysis only. The only people who will hear this tape will be members of the research team. As is indicated in the informed consent, everything you say on this tape will be kept confidential and your responses will not be tied to you as an individual in any way. I will disconnect all identifying information from the interview, including obscuring any specific information you share with me about yourself or your family. Whatever I write about this will be aggregated across all interviewees, so that no identifying information whatsoever will be revealed.

In this interview, I'll be asking you about your experiences as a husband and father, specifically as a husband and father in a marital relationship that I will refer to as power-sharing. As you may remember from our phone conversation, my definition of a power-sharing marriage is one where partners hold mutual status, actively negotiate roles, share decision-making and provide mutual attention to family and household tasks. We will be covering many different areas, and I will give you an opportunity at the end to add anything I may have overlooked.

- 1) (Warm Up) What interested you in participating in this study?
- 2) I am wondering how you believe the power-sharing label that we have discussed fits for your family. What does it look like for you?
  - For example, how would you describe your relationship with your wife, with your children, and with your living space?
- 3) Now that you have told me about your marriage, can you tell me how your situation compares to the marriages of others you know – like your friends or colleagues?
  - How are these other relationships similar to yours? Different?
- 4) I'm wondering how you view power-sharing as a concept. I am wondering if you think of it as an individual choice for you and your family or do you consider it more generally to be a positive/beneficial arrangement for all marriages (women and men).
- 5) I am curious about your family of origin. Could you describe your household growing up, your relationship with your parents and siblings? The nature of your parent's marriage?
  - Do you believe you were influenced by these early family experiences? If yes, how were you influenced?

Now I would like to ask you some questions about how you came to be in your current relationship. I'm curious about what motivates you and how you came to this experience (for these questions, refer back to his answer in #2 if necessary for prompts).

- 6) So, tell me a little bit about what motivates you to be in what we are referring to as a power-sharing marriage.

- What are the attitudes, thoughts and feelings that contribute to your desire to be in and stay in this type of marriage?
  - Are there specific rewards associated with being a power-sharing husband and father?
- 7) How did you come to be motivated to be in a power-sharing relationship? Was it deliberate? Did it unfold over time?
- Can you remember the first time you felt as though this was the type of marital relationship that you wanted or the first time you felt satisfied with this kind of arrangement? What inspired these thoughts and feelings?
- 8) Have you encountered any difficulties or challenges associated with the attitudes, thoughts and feelings that motivate you to be in a power-sharing marriage?

Now I would like to shift from talking about your internal motivations and experience to talk about external factors – things out in the world, outside of you and your family that may influence your experience of a power-sharing relationship.

- 9) Are there external factors that help you manage a power-sharing marriage, for example, aspects of your workplace, your spouse's employment, finances, extended family?
- 10) Are there, or have there been, external barriers to becoming or maintaining your status as a power-sharing partner and father? In other words, have there been external factors that have gotten in the way of being a power-sharing partner and father?
- (If yes), What were they and how did you deal with these barriers?
- 11) Is there anything else you would like to share?
- Would you like to share any feedback with me about the interview questions or the interview process?
  - May I contact you again in the future if I have any questions about this interview?
  - If you remember anything and/or something comes to your mind that you believe is relevant to this research, please do not hesitate to contact me (will provide slip with e-mail address and phone number).

## Appendix F: Field Notes Form

Tape number:

Date:

Participant (first name, last initial):

Length of interview:

Comments on rapport:

General themes:

Other noteworthy information (may include interruptions or difficulties in conducting interview, questions that were unclear to interviewee, prior contact with interviewee, notes on interviewee's tone of voice or speaking style, etc.):

## Appendix G: Master Category List CATEGORY LIST

### Power-Sharing Concept

- Response to question, “how does power-sharing fit for you?” (But could also be found elsewhere in transcript)
- These responses are ideas about what the concept incorporates at a theoretical level.

### Power-Sharing Realities

- Can also be response to question, “how does power-sharing fit for you?” (But could also be found elsewhere in transcript)
- These responses are example based and include specific tasks.

### Relationship with Partner

- This is direct reference to relationship with wife.
- This is NOT description of partner but may be description of the marital relationship.
- This may be hard to distinguish from Power-Sharing Concept and Power-Sharing Reality, so we will have to think hard about what the discrete characteristics are of this category.

### Relationship with Children

- This is response to question about the relationship with his children.
- This is only about HIS relationship with HIS children.
- May include examples of activities – however, again this may be hard to distinguish from Power-sharing realities. Can be coded both.
- Feelings

### Comparison to Other Fathers

- Response to question, “how does your situation compare to the marriage of others you know? How are they similar or different?” (Again, may also find these type of responses at other points of transcript).
- This is when he makes comparisons specifically with other fathers (peers, friends, colleagues or “average” father).

### Comparison with other Families

- Again, response to question, “how does your situation compare to the marriage of others you know? How are they similar or different?” (Again, may also find these type of responses at other points of transcript).
- This is when he compares his family functioning or overall family structure to those around him: peers, colleagues, friends and/or “average” family.

### Social Circle

- This is description of those with whom he surrounds himself with socially.

- Comments about why he chooses the friends he does.
- Can include responses regarding social SUPPORT.

#### Power-Sharing as Ideology

- Response to, “I am wondering if you think of power-sharing as an individual choice for you and your family or do you consider it more generally to be a positive/beneficial arrangement for all marriages?” (Can also be found elsewhere in transcript)
- Any reference to power-sharing as a social imperative.

#### Family of Origin – Mother

- Description of Mother and her role in his family.
- Also, includes influence based on mother’s role in family or his relationship with her.

#### Family of Origin – Father

- Description of Father and his role in his family.
- Also, includes influence based on father’s role in family or his relationship with him.

#### General Description of Family of Origin

- This would include responses that talk about overall family functioning.
- Include discussion of siblings here.
- Also could include how mother and father related to one another and the impact of this on the participant.
- This includes influences he perceives regarding family structure/family dynamics as a unit.

#### Personal-Motivators

- This is in response to question, “What motivates you to be in what we are referring to as a power-sharing marriage?”
- This will include subject-specific motivators (ie, I wanted to have a solid relationship with my children; my spouse wouldn’t have allowed it any other way; I like to be involved in family-life)

#### Social Motivators

- This will be in response to the probes of the question above.
- Includes specific political, philosophical or religious beliefs and values that he identifies as motivating him to engage in this type of marriage.

#### Timing of Power-Sharing Engagement

- Response to questions, 1) Was it deliberate or did it unfold over time; and 2) Can you remember the first time you felt as though this was the type of marital relationship that you wanted or the first time you felt satisfied with this kind of arrangements?

- This type of response relates to when they “decided” they wanted this kind of relationship.

#### Partner’s characteristics

- Description of participants spouse

#### Internal Struggles

- Response to “any difficulties or challenges associated with attitudes that motivate you to be in power-sharing marriage?”
- For example, many fathers talk about guilt – both regarding not enough time at home or at work.

#### External Facilitators

- These are the things out in the world that help these fathers maintain power-sharing relationship.

#### External Barriers

- Things out in the world that make it difficult for fathers to maintain power-sharing relationship.

#### Power-Sharing Trade-Off

- Leisure activities not doing
- Work things not doing
- Another example: in-laws moving in
- Financial trade-offs another e.g.

#### Power-Sharing Difficulties

- Things that make power-sharing hard

#### Father Relational History

- Women dated before current marriage

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