AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF EIGHT DUAL-CAREER FAMILIES: 
THEIR RESPONSIBILITY FOR AND PERFORMANCE AND NEGOTIATION OF 
HOUSEHOLD AND CHILDCARE TASKS 

by 
Mary Tibbals Ventre 

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APPROVED: 

Gloria W. Bird, Chair 

Margaret A. Eisenhart 
Howard O. Protinsky 

Rosemary Blieszner 
Janet Sawyers 

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(ABSTRACT)

This qualitative study documented how household and child care task sharing in eight dual-career families is allocated and negotiated. There were two specific aspects of shared tasks: responsibility for tasks as well as performance of tasks. Flexibility of spouses' employment as it affects task sharing was an important variable. I used ethnographic methods to analyze the data from four interviews and two participant observations with each family. Findings described the balance of task sharing in the families: two families shared the total family work load equally; five families strive to share the total work load but fall just short of that goal; and in one family the wife is the primary household and child care worker; the
husband helps her. Standards for household and child care tasks are very similar for each set of spouses; differences lead to task negotiation. I present the spouses' strategies for negotiating household tasks. The findings also include spouses' career commitment, influences on spouses' task sharing and the importance of flexibility of employment for dual-career family life. In seven of the eight dual-career families, whose wives earned 40% of more of family income, sharing of household and child care tasks was very high: in these families the husbands performed at least half of the household and child care tasks. Task responsibility if shared equally in only one family; wives remain the family executives. Career commitment was strong in all but two spouses: these two were considering quitting work at some time to take care of children. The two families who share the total family work load equally use more cooperative negotiation strategies than the other families use. The spouse who has the most flexible employment performs more household and child care tasks than the other spouse does.
Note: All names of informants are fictitious. Some facts about the families have been changed to protect their identities.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

This paper reports the results of a qualitative study of eight dual-career families, identifying who in the family takes responsibility for household and child care tasks and who performs the tasks. It investigates how distribution of the tasks between spouses is negotiated and evaluates the flexibility of spouses' employment as it affects task sharing.

In this study I used the definition of dual-career families first proposed by Rapoport and Rapoport (1969), and used since by many other researchers (Bebbington, 1973; Bird, Bird & Scruggs, 1984; Epstein, 1971; Pendleton, Poloma & Garland, 1980). Dual-career families, according to the Rapoorts (1969), are those families whose spouses are employed in careers and who have at least one child. For practical purposes, career denotes professional, managerial or administrative employment.

This project concentrates on the concept of task sharing, analyzing as a distributed and differentiated phenomenon what has more often been considered a unitary one. I divide task sharing into
(a) responsibility for tasks, and (b) actual task performance. In a family context, to take responsibility for household and child care tasks is to initiate, plan, organize and review tasks. Task responsibility usually leads to actual task performance by the responsible person or delegatee, or negotiation of task performance between spouses. Household and child care tasks include all "household work activities" (Berk, 1985, p. 2).

The negotiation of these household and child care tasks was also a focus of a part of this study. A couple negotiates, according to Weingarten (1978), all of the time at some level to accomplish household and child care tasks. This negotiation process produces, ultimately, the family's pattern of task-sharing.

An important moderator of negotiated task sharing is employment flexibility. Holmstrom (1973) found, for instance, that flexibility of work hours afforded some husbands the opportunity to participate more often in family tasks. In this study, flexibility of employment denotes whether a parent can leave work to take care of family business, or arrange work hours to accommodate family needs.
The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of an ethnographic study of the eight dual-career families who served as informants for the research. As their stories and my analysis of them unfolds, the patterns in their task sharing will emerge and will permit some assertions to be made as to how the eight couples allocate both task responsibility and task performance; how they negotiate task allocation; and how flexibility of employment affects negotiated task sharing. The four parts of this report are: (a) background on the research topic, (b) study design, (c) findings, and (d) assertions and implications based on the completed research.
Chapter 2

Background on the Research

Introduction

I present an overview of the literature on task-sharing in dual-earner and dual-career families in this chapter. I examine those studies which relate specifically to this research; these are studies, primarily qualitative ones, that influence this research and that ground this investigation.

Next, I report literature describing studies on task negotiation; and then describe literature on flexibility of employment. I explicate the place of this study in the literature reviewed. The purpose of the study and research questions bring this chapter to a close.

Task Performance and Responsibility

Responsibility for household and child care tasks differs from actual performance of those tasks (Hoffman, 1960; Lovingood & Firebaugh, 1978; Moen, 1983). Nevertheless, few studies differentiate between task performance and task responsibility (Walker & Woods, 1976) and many studies reviewed combine several task items into one reported measure, or assess only a few tasks but
draw broad conclusions. In this research I consider a wide range of tasks and differentiate between responsibility and performance where appropriate: when noted in reported research, and in the findings of this study.

**Dual-earner studies.** Some studies of dual-earner (where each spouse has a job as contrasted with a career) couples report that husbands are moving toward sharing of household and child care tasks and responsibilities with wives. Hoffman (1960), for example, studied the effects of maternal employment on household task division and responsibility (which she called "activity control") in a matched sample of 178 families, 89 with employed mothers and 89 with nonemployed mothers. She found that: husbands of employed wives in contrast to other husbands, participate more in household tasks; employed wives spend less time doing household tasks than nonemployed wives; and employed wives share more routine household decisions with husbands than did nonemployed wives.

Stafford's (1980) time diary study found women's time use converging with men's. This did not mean, however, that men help substantively more in dual-earner families; rather women do less
housework, and possibly, less child care, while men increase their
task performance only a little. Sanik (1981) also reported via time
data collected in 1967 and 1977, that wives, even if employed, spend
more time on household tasks than husbands.

Husbands' participation in household work seems to be higher when
wives earn as much or more yearly income as husbands do, than when
they earn less than husbands. Model (1981) found, in a subsample of
55 wives taken from a much larger sample of Detroit women, that the
subsample shows high participation from husbands in household tasks.
But most of the subsample families are in the low-income range (in
only three families did the spouses earn more than $20,000 annually).

In a study that looked only at household work time, Pleck and
Rustad (1980) concluded that husbands' and wives' total work time
(paid work + household work) is almost equal: wives report working
only 12 more minutes per day than husbands. This study indicated an
increase in husband participation over that reported in earlier studies.

Abdel-Ghany and Nickols (1983) found for wives that hours of paid
employment and education are negatively related to housework; in
brief, wives with more education and longer hours of employment are
performing fewer household chores. Wives in dual-earner families still do more housework than husbands. Lein (1984) also found, in a qualitative study of 23 dual-earner families with young children, that wives do more of the housework and child care than husbands. Two families in her study, however, shared all the household work and child care.

Pleck (1982), reporting the results of two time studies, found that role overload typical of the mid-1960's for employed wives compared to their husbands is nearly eliminated. Husbands and wives share total work time nearly equally. In a 1984 report incorporating new data, Pleck found that husbands perform more domestic work when wives are employed than when they are not, but wives still retain more tasks.

In 1984, Pleck compared two time-use studies and concluded that husbands of employed wives are not performing more child care in the narrow sense (specifically caring for or helping children as coded in the 1975-1976 Study of Time Use) but are caring more for children in the larger sense (caring for or doing things with children as coded in the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey). He also theorized that there
is a shift in society toward more husband participation in family work, especially child care, and that sole breadwinner husbands, as well as husbands whose wives are employed, increase family time as well—and this explains why there is no family time increase solely for wife-employed husbands.

Full-time employment of wives does result in more sharing of housework by husbands in families with at least one child according to findings of Perlmutter and Wampler (1985). Also found to influence husband's family task participation are the presence of children and husbands having an egalitarian gender-role orientation. A time diary study by Nyquist, Slivken, Spence and Helmreich (1985) found that employed wives do have more task assistance from husbands than wives who are not employed.

Younger husbands may be committing more time to the household. That was one of the findings of Coverman and Sheley (1986) who reported that younger husbands in their study spend an average of 25 minutes per week more on household tasks than older age groups.

Contrasting with Pleck's (1982; 1984) and others' findings is that of Clarke, Allen and Salinas (1986), who used conjoint time-budgeting
to document the activities of married couples with and without children. They reported that wives produce more total work time throughout the week than husbands, and that much work is done by wives on the weekend, while husbands are involved in leisure activities. Husbands, however, do take care of children on weekends while wives take part in leisure activities.

Reporting on a study of 160 husbands and wives with at least one child (with 37--almost 50%--of the mothers working full time), Barnett and Baruch (1987) found evidence that employed wives have less time for housework and are therefore more likely to get help from husbands, especially with child care. Even so, wives perform the greater amount of housework.

Taken all together, the recent dual-earner research shows one primary factor to be important for husbands' increasing assumption of household and childcare tasks: wives who work. Additional factors shown to influence husbands' household and/or childcare work participation are, (a) wives' education--the higher it is the more tasks a husband is likely to perform, (b) wives longer employment hours or full-time employment, (c) having at least one child, (d) husbands'
having a feminine/egalitarian gender-role orientation, (e) spouses being young, and (f) wives earning as much or more than husbands.

Many studies reported that wives do most of the household work (e.g., Berheide, Berk, & Berk, 1976; Berk, 1985; Cogle, Beakley & McFatter, 1981; Condran & Bode, 1982; Nickols & Metzen, 1978) reflect study populations that are a mix of nonemployed wives and employed wives (some part and some full-time) and wives with and without children. This heterogeneity makes the assignment of specific findings for different sub-groups difficult and scientifically suspect. For instance, it seems obvious that wives who work full time and have two young children will have different household work arrangements than nonemployed wives with no children, so that populations with variations in employment and children are not comparable. Yet much research in the field of dual-earner families fails to make a distinction between the various categories of women in terms of employment and number/age of children of the women studied or to define the terms used in the study. Hiller and Dyehouse, in a recent article (1987), were critical of these very issues, and called for a definition of terms—especially the term career—used in dual-career
and/or dual-earner studies in order for the studies to have some meaning, value and coherence as a body of knowledge on the subject accumulates.

**Dual-career studies.** Dual-career families appear to be moving toward more equitable task sharing faster than dual-earner families. This difference is due, at least in part, to dual-career wives having greater influence within the family (Bird, Bird, & Scruggs, 1984). This influence is attributable to their attaining higher levels of education and earnings (Bird & Bird, 1986; Maret & Finlay, 1984; Scanzoni, 1980a) than dual-earner wives. Hertz (1986) also inferred that where gender differences are seen to decline, incomes must be relatively equal.

Qualitative and quantitative research on dual-career marriages, completed in the early-to mid-1970's and one in the early 1980's, found that dual-career wives perform most family tasks, especially when child care tasks are added to those of the household (Bryson, Bryson, Licht & Licht, 1976; Epstein; 1971; Heckman, Bryson & Bryson, 1977; Yogev, 1981). Although women are still the primary performers of these tasks (Holmstrom, 1973; Poloma & Garland, 1971; Scanzoni & Scanzoni, 1981), husbands participate more in household chores when
wives are employed in careers than when wives do not work outside
the home. Poloma and Garland (1971), describing a study of 53
dual-career families, found that only one of the 53 families shared
reported, in a qualitative study of ten dual-career families, that task
division was traditional in all but one family; and that wives handled
most of the tasks.

Studies conducted more recently reported that dual-career
husbands may now be assuming a greater number of tasks. Weingarten
(1978) reported, for example, that professionally employed husbands
of professional wives who work full time and continuously during
their marriages share family work more equitably except in the area
of child care, where the wife remains the major task performer. Bird,
Bird and Scruggs (1984) found that dual-career wives and husbands
report sharing child care, meal preparation and cleaning tasks to a
greater extent than couples in other family types. They concluded that
career wives expect husbands to share family tasks and that husbands
support these expectations both in attitude and behavior.

Bird and Ford's (1985) study of dual-career couples related that
husbands who are parents of young children participate to a greater extent in child care tasks and thus experience more role strain than other fathers. Gilbert (1985) interviewed men in dual-career marriages, and half reported sharing household tasks while 57% reported sharing child care equally with wives.

This most recent dual-career research points to several factors that are an important influence for men's assumption of more household and child care work: (a) wives having greater education and income, (b) wives working full time and continuously, (c) having a dual-career marriage, and (d) having young children.

Although much more research has been carried out on dual-earner families than on the dual-career subset, the findings are quite similar for both groups. One difference in the two sets of studies is methodological: more factors have been identified that influence dual-earner husbands' task participation than have been identified for dual-career husbands. The main difference in findings between the two family types is that men in dual-career families have just that: a family with two careers, particularly a wife who is employed in a career; whereas men in two-earner families (or career/earner
families) have wives who take jobs not because they are career oriented but frequently to "add to" family income (Poloma & Garland, 1971; Scanzoni, 1980b).

It is quite likely then, looking at studies ranging from Blood and Wolfe (1960) to Scanzoni (1980b) and Bird, Bird and Scruggs (1984), that it is the career wife, usually commanding higher earnings than the dual-earner wife, who is responsible for more movement in the direction of equal task sharing within dual-career marriages. And it is with this in mind that I utilized wives as subjects who made at least 40% of the family income (more on this subject in the chapter on Methodology), and hypothesized finding more task sharing based on this spousal sharing of earned income.

**Studies that influenced this project.** A number of studies about dual-career families published between 1969 and 1986 had a strong influence on the origination and orientation of this project. These are, with one exception, qualitative studies of dual-career families.

The first study, in which the authors coined the term "dual-career", was reported by Rhona and Robert Rapoport in 1969. The authors defined dual-career families as,
Families in which both heads of household pursue careers (i.e. jobs which are highly salient personally, have a developmental sequence and require a high degree of commitment) and at the same time establish a family life with at least one child (p. 3).

The Rapoports' viewed the dual-career family as a partnership in which there was division of family labor, and that labor was distributed equally to both spouses on a basis of gender equality (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1969).

The authors estimated at the time that the number of dual-career families in Britain was less than 5%. They nevertheless considered a study of this minority population worthwhile because, they theorized, it was likely that the numbers of dual-career families would grow as women's education rates increased and as more employment opportunities become available to them. The purpose of their study was to describe various factors that keep educated women from participating in the work force at the level of their abilities and to understand the consequences for families of choosing the dual-career pattern (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1971). This qualitative study of 13 dual-career families, part of a larger, more comprehensive British study of highly qualified career women, was of "concepts explicitly
linking men's and women's roles and work and family domains" (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1969, p. 3).

The research consisted of four interviews, supplemented by interviews with friends of the couple, colleagues and others. The author conducted the interviews at sites chosen by the spouses or others. Two interviewers were present at the joint interviews and one or two interviewers were present at the individual interviews depending on the choice of the interviewee. Rapoport and Rapoport used an "interview guide" (1971, p. 323) and covered all parts of it during the interviews with each family. They used the guide to ensure comparability across families. They taped the interviews for later transcription.

The investigators used this interview data to construct categories for data analysis. They next wrote about the families and checked with the families as to the correctness of their perceptions.

Rapoport and Rapoport took every precaution to avoid misrepresenting the families interviewed. They also sought to avoid upsetting a family in any way as a result of their having participated in the study.
The study focused on stresses and strains within the family due to managing the tasks, activities and friend/family networks in their dual-career lifestyle. The authors identified five dilemmas: (a) role overload, (b) discrepancy between personal norms and social expectations, (c) dilemmas of identity; (d) dilemmas involving friends and family, and (e) dilemmas of cycling various roles (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1969, pp. 8-21).

In the research conclusions Rapoport and Rapoport state that,

The capacity of women, particularly married women with children, to grasp the increasingly available opportunities and to exercise to their fullest capacities the available career roles will depend on the degree to which these roles can be made compatible with the demands of women's other roles (1969, p. 27).

Other conclusions are: that redefinition of marital roles facilitates dual-career wives assuming a career of equal importance to the dual-career husband; couples need to share household tasks, but sharing of child care is of the greatest importance. This study reported the amount of spousal task sharing as high, medium or low, but did not specify the criteria on which the ratings were based.

Epstein (1971) studied 12 couples each of whom were law
partners in the same legal firm. She examined how this type of joint employment affects family life and the spouses individually, and how shared employment affects wives' careers favorably or unfavorably.

Epstein identified law partners from a larger study of women lawyers in New York City and suburbs. She randomly selected the original sample of 69 women lawyers from a law directory; and this subsample of 12 consisted of those women married to lawyers with whom they worked. She chose the interview data collection method, but did not specify the number of interviews per person or couple.

Wives, compared to husbands, handle the less prestigious and less public aspects of law practice. Wives report benefitting from sharing law practices with husbands by more easily combining work and motherhood.

Spouses divide household and child care tasks in a traditional manner with husbands contributing an insignificant amount of work in their households. According to Epstein (1971),

The wives assumed primary responsibility for management of the home and care of the children. Surrogates were used in all cases, and the wives directed them.

The wives manage the home responsibilities, and hire much of the
household and child care labor.

Poloma (1971) and Garland (1972) conducted a joint study of 53 professional women and their husbands. They selected the first part of their sample from women associated with a large university that included medical and law schools. They asked couples who participated initially to suggest other couples who might qualify and be interested. The final sample of 53 couples contained professional women at various stages of their careers. They used a structured questionnaire to collect data.

Poloma (1971) concluded that the family is an impediment to a women's career advancement. She (1971, p. 533) illustrated Van de Berghe's (1970, p. 376) "tolerance of domestication" with findings from the study: (a) egalitarian division of household labor is lacking in 52 of the 53 families studied, (b) many of the women have jobs not careers, and (c) most of the women studied do not perceive that they have been discriminated against professionally.

The author saw family structure as the problem. Women take part-time jobs in their fields, refuse jobs when they cannot move due to family and turn down fellowships so as to maintain the status quo
Poloma (1971) offered several reasons why women tolerate a family structure that harms their careers. First, socialization differences between men and women account for some acceptance of domestication; second, women are innured to differences in opportunities in the job market; third, cognitive dissonance exists for these women; and finally, the women are quite satisfied with their lives as they are.

Using the same data from the 53 professional families, Garland (1972) focused on the dual-career husbands. He found that they fall into four family types: (a) traditional families in which the husband is the provider of economic means for the family, the wife’s job is secondary and the wife does most of the domestic work; (b) neotraditional families in which the spouses both share the provider role and the wife’s career is considered by both spouses to be important; (c) matriarchal families in which the wife has the more important career position; and, (d) egalitarian families in which both spouses participate equally in providing economically for the family and in domestic work. The distribution of families was: 20
Garland documented husband's feelings about wives' careers. He found that traditional husbands view wives' careers as secondary, that neotraditional and egalitarian husbands see their wives' careers as important but not threatening and that matriarchal husbands view their wives' careers with acceptance and resignation (1971). In other words, having a career wife is not threatening to most of the men surveyed, and many of them are supportive of their wives' career activities.

Holmstrom's study of the two-career family (1973) focused on understanding the difficulties of this lifestyle. Her participants were 22 dual-career families and seven traditional families. She used a strategic sampling method to obtain her sample. This allowed her to choose those participants of research who could contribute most about the subject being studied. Holmstrom used "free-style" (1973, p. 86) interviews which had topic guides. Interviews were flexible, but covered every topic in every family. She interviewed all of the wives and all but three husbands.
Couples face both internal and external problems. Inflexibility of occupations and difficulties in coordinating two careers are external barriers to the lifestyle. Internal problems are unequal division of household labor which facilitates men's careers, competitiveness between spouses and the difficulty of scheduling two careers with family life.

Holmstrom (1973) found that some women in the study had to choose between being in a career or staying married. This choice was forced on them when balancing a career and child rearing became difficult—and they lacked enough practical support from husbands to manage the overload.

Another qualitative study, Weingarten's (1978), considered how professional couples distributed household and child care tasks. Her sample consisted of 32 professional couples (with children), belonging to three age groups, in which the wives either had been continuously employed full-time since marriage or had been employed part-time. In both groups the husband had been employed full-time and continuously. She located the sample in two ways: some by randomly choosing names from lists of professional women; others by a
"network-sampling" method (1978, p. 44).

Weingarten (1978) collected data through the use of structured interviews that lasted on the average of 1-1/4 hours. The interviews were made up of 80 questions. She taped the interviews for later transcription.

The results of Weingarten's study (1978) were that couples with a similar employment history (both had been full-time and continuously employed since marriage) and younger couples (age 28-31) have a more equitable distribution of family tasks than older couples or those in which the wife has a part-time employment history. Husbands of wives who work continuously contribute more household work, but do not participate equally in child care. Wives who are employed continuously do less family work than wives who work part-time.

Results further showed that husbands participate more equitably in household tasks when wives are full-time and continuously employed; but that husbands do not participate in child care more whether their wives are employed full-time or part-time.

St. John-Parsons (1978) used the Rapoport and Rapoport (1971) "guided interview approach" (p. 30) to study 10 dual-career families
from 14 professions in England. This made comparability with the earlier study possible.

Wives in this study had been employed continuously since marriage. The researcher located sample families with the assistance of people known to him. He held three or four interviews with each couple: one was a joint interview, the next two were with the spouses individually, and sometimes a final one was held with both spouses. He worked alone, rather than using two interviewers as in the Rapoport and Rapoport (1969) study. He taped all interviews; and transcribed those that he considered important to the study.

Most of the 20 tasks and domestic responsibilities studied are handled primarily by wives or paid help. Most husbands maintain cars and perform household maintenance; they share planning of holidays, financial decisions and the disciplining of children with wives.

Other findings of this study were that spouses do not integrate their employment; that work overload is experienced by all couples; and that all the spouses believe there are more benefits from the dual-career lifestyle than problems.

Gilbert, (1985) studied men in dual-career marriages. She found
the sample of 51 men by contacting married career women who were members of professional groups and telephoning them to describe the study. Participation criteria were: (a) that both spouses were employed full time in careers or in graduate school, (b) that the marriage was at least two years old and (c) that the husband was at least 28 or older and younger than 46. If wives said husbands met the criteria, the investigator then telephoned husbands and asked them to be a part of the study.

Gilbert interviewed each husband once for about 75 minutes, using a variation of the Rapoport and Rapoport (1969) interview guide (Gilbert, 1985). The investigation utilized only one interviewer—a woman who was a research assistant trained as an interviewer.

The interview guide covered spouses' employment, husbands' role in the family, performance of six household tasks, performance of six child care tasks, family relationships and effects of having a dual-career marriage on family life and on the husband's career. Each husband also completed a questionnaire on work and family at the end of the interview.

Over half the men regarded household and parenting tasks as fairly
evenly shared. Some men thought they did more than half the household tasks (4%) and parenting tasks (5%). About 40% thought their wives did more household work and parenting tasks. Paid helpers assisted some families. Only 14% of the men saw the effect of household tasks as negative whereas the rest report no effect.

Over half of the men had incomes greater than their wives, one quarter reported comparable incomes and 16% had incomes that were less than their wives. Men who made less than their wives reported that this did not bother them—Gilbert (1985) theorized that these men were more interested in mastery than power. Half of the men thought their wives’ careers were as important as their own; half thought their own careers were more important.

Gilbert grouped the 29 fathers with children who lived at home on the basis of their attitudes toward household and child care tasks into: (a) a traditional group comprised of eight (fathers said spouses take care of household and child care tasks), (b) a participant group of eight (fathers reported wives do most of the household tasks but they shared parenting), and (c) a role-sharing group of 13 (fathers reported sharing both household and child care tasks).
Hertz (1986) reported on a qualitative study of 21 couples in organizational careers. Sixty-five percent of the sample had children, 35% did not. All wives had been continuously employed since marriage; some had taken off less than six months after having a child.

Hertz interviewed each of the spouses an average of 2.5 hours. She used a semi-structured format in the interviews with a set of questions to be covered.

She found that dual-career couples have autonomy with two careers/incomes if outside labor is available when needed and if the couple could meet the requirements of two employers. Dual-career women (she did not say dual-career men as well) are dependent on services provided by working-class women or daycare providers in order to have careers because child care is the most difficult issue dual-career spouses face.

Hertz (1986) found that for these couples, marriage was a "shared career" (p. 54). She stated that the two careers, in which incomes are relatively equitable, are responsible for molding the career marriage. Hertz relates:

It is the practice of combining two careers, not the artic-
ulation of nonsexist ideology, which shapes decisions and informs change (p. 59).

The studies reviewed in this section have all influenced the conceptualizing of the present research project and the organizing of its methodology. The Rapoport and Rapoport (1969) study was perhaps the most influential both in developing criteria for subjects chosen and in methodology. To their choice of interviews of the couples, both joint and individual, I added two participant observation sessions (Spradley, 1979). Further, I expanded the number of questions about household and child care tasks and responsibilities from the original ones.

I used different criteria in choosing dual-career wives for this study. Women who contribute more than 40 percent of the earned family income were chosen to participate in this study as they are strong marital partners and share the economic role with husbands. I avoided women who have achieved fame (as had those women chosen by the Rapoport & Rapoport study) in this study because findings about the especially successful only apply to a small number of dual-career wives.

The study reported in 1978 by St. John-Parsons influenced me in
regard to asking questions about a large range of household tasks and responsibilities. It informed the choice of task categories.

Studies by Epstein (1971), Holmstrom (1973), Garland, (1972) and Poloma (1971) also influenced this research. Particularly influential was Holmstrom’s writing on employment flexibility and Poloma’s explication of why women are willing to accept the larger share of household and child care tasks to the detriment of their careers.

Weingarten (1978), Gilbert (1985) and Hertz (1986) found more sharing of household and child care tasks than had past studies. Gilbert, especially, reported much more sharing of domestic work by husbands.

The studies examined in detail above all provide extensive information on sharing of household and child care tasks in dual-career families. The literature reviewed chronicles the movement over time toward more sharing of these tasks by dual-career spouses.

I initiated this project to take another, somewhat similar look at dual-career families, updating the research but looking only at dual-career families whose spouses share the provider role. The focus
of this research was on trying to understand how couples negotiate sharing in these families and what influenced spouses to expect sharing in their marriages.

Turning from studies on dual-career task performance and responsibility that have had an impact on this research design to family negotiation of tasks and responsibilities, I seek in the present study to understand how families negotiate and allocate tasks.

**Task Negotiation**

The term "task negotiation", in this study, means the necessary interactions with another person (and possibly additional persons) to accomplish the total amount of household work (Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980). The term negotiation is synonymous with bargaining. As mentioned earlier in the literature review, women with higher incomes and educations have more bargaining power in family decision-making (Bird & Bird, 1986; Scanzoni, 1980b). If dual-career women, who contribute approximately half of the family earned income have more power in the family, how do they negotiate tasks and responsibilities for tasks in an equalitarian fashion? What are the strategies that dual-career spouses use to negotiate tasks and responsibilities? The
literature on family power and negotiation informs this question.

Scanzoni and Polonko (1980), in an article on negotiation of married couples, illustrated and explicated Strauss' (1978) model of marital negotiation. The authors synthesized this model with other partial theories of negotiation to construct a more complete and complex model.

First, Scanzoni and Polonko (1980) outlined the context variables of Strauss' (1978) model. These were clusters of variables: (a) compositional variables such as age, race and so on; (b) resource variables such as education and income; (c) variables relating to bargaining power such as self-esteem and how much one has at stake in the bargaining; and (d) variables that relate to bargaining done in the past, as trust, ability to compromise, and so forth (p. 32).

Secondly, the model viewed these context variables as acting upon or reacting to the bargaining process—which is behaviorally exemplified by various manipulations of the environment. The third part of the process concerned outcome as negotiations.

The manipulations that occur in the bargaining process, referred to as “tactics” (Buss, Gomes, Higgens & Lauterbach, 1987), or “strategies”
were part of the focus of this research: the “how” of dual-career spouses’ task negotiations. This should lead to a better understanding of task negotiation in the studied families.

In a study of manipulation tactics, Falbo and Peplau (1980) found 13 power strategies used by couples. They are (p. 621): asking, bargaining, laissez-faire, negative affect, persistence, persuasion, positive affect, reasoning, stating importance, suggesting, talking, telling and withdrawal. Buss et al. (1987) found six major factors on which the tactics varied. The six are (pp. 1221-1222): charm, silent treatment, coercion, reason, regression and debasement. The list of negotiation strategies and factors guided the formulations of findings in the chapter on task negotiations.

The process of negotiation, in which spouses try to influence and modify each other’s positions, leads to an outcome of either agreement or disagreement. Couples make task and responsibility allocations in this third stage. Theoretically, if the spouses have approximately the same context variable strengths, they will have equitable power and an equal distribution of household and child care tasks and
responsibilities will evolve over time (Scanzoni & Polonko, 1980). Turk (1975) wrote that at this point an egalitarian couple make choices that are a mixture of both what the wife wants and what the husband wants. Turk (1975) believed that outcomes cannot be seen merely as one person winning and the other losing, but that reciprocal power was the correct term to explain many marital negotiations. Sprey (1972) also suggested that family negotiations involved reciprocal power in which each spouse has power input into decision-making. This concept is similar to that of symmetrical bargaining power (Scanzoni and Polonko, 1980) in which the partners were matched on the dimensions listed by Strauss (1978) in the first stage of his model. The outcome of task negotiation can be stable or unstable and subject to frequent negotiation; it is the stable, cooperative kinds of negotiation that result from reciprocal power.

Task negotiation takes place within decision-making processes (Scanzoni, 1979). One can view it from the standpoint of power within a marriage. Power influences decision-making (Cromwell & Olsen, 1975; Falbo & Peplau, 1980).

In an overview of the literature on family power, Broderick
(1975), reported two main facts: (a) families must make decisions about allocation of their resources as well as other matters, and (b) negotiation of these issues involves the use of power. My study used Broderick's findings in focusing on strategies spouses use to determine family decisions about household and child care tasks and responsibilities, using descriptions of the patterns of negotiation found through the use of ethnographic methods as recommended by Turk (1975) and Weiting and McLaren (1975).

The final section of this review of literature reports on studies about flexibility of employment and its impact on families.

**Flexibility of Employment**

An aspect of dual-career employment that influences task performance is flexibility of employment: that is, whether a parent can leave work to pick up a sick child or to take care of family business, or whether hours can be more or less flexibly arranged to suit family needs. Epstein (1971) found, in her study of spouses who were also law partners, that wives benefit greatly by the time flexibility afforded them by partnership with husbands. The wives are able to better meet both child care and employment needs due to their
flexible situation.

The dual-career study of Holmstrom (1973) found that in order for family needs and career needs to be integrated better, jobs need to be more flexible. A job can be flexible even though the weekly number of hours worked remains constant. Holmstrom found that greater flexibility of work hours affords some husbands the opportunity to participate more often and more completely in family tasks; and job flexibility enables women to manage their family needs better.

Young and Wilmott (1973) also called for flexible scheduling. They saw the need for a variety of flexible kinds of innovations if families are to reconcile child care and careers in a less stressful way.

Cohen and Gadon (1978) discussed varieties of flexible working hours in their book on alternative work schedules. They cited advantages for the individual which include child care, taking care of necessary shopping and errands and spending more time with families.

Winnett and Neale reported a 1983 time-activity log study of government workers who used flexible work scheduling to switch to an earlier schedule. The results showed that the workers use the extra time for family activities. Another study, by the Bureau of National
Affairs (1986), reporting on family and work, lists flexible work hours and flexible use of vacation time and personal days as important for workers with child care responsibilities. The book cited a case study in which the employer was willing to combine personal leave, sick leave and vacation time to give employees more flexibility in the use of time for family needs.

I propose to investigate whether spouses who both have more flexible work situations benefit from that flexibility in caring for children and performing other household tasks; and whether in unmatched work situations— one spouse with flexible work and the other with inflexible work— the spouse with the more flexible job performs more household and child care tasks than the other spouse.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

I designed this study, based on the literature reviewed, to explore some issues concerning dual-career families:

1. How dual-career families in which the wife contributes 40% or more of the family income allocate performance of and responsibility for household and child care tasks;

2. How dual-career families negotiate these tasks and
responsibilities;

3. How employment flexibility or inflexibility affects family task participation.

The research questions for this study were further defined in these areas:

1. What household and child care tasks do the couples identify?
2. How do the couples allocate the identified tasks?
3. Who takes ultimate responsibility for the tasks: that is, who has the initiation, delegation, implementation or review role for each task, or does this vary?
4. How do the couples negotiate task performance and task responsibility?
5. How does each spouse's employment flexibility or inflexibility affect task sharing?

These research questions will be answered for the eight families who provided the data for this study.
Chapter 3

The Study Design

I now describe in detail the design for this study of eight dual-career families: the sample selection, the selection of the co-researchers, the data collection, the analysis procedures and issues of reliability and validity.¹

Sample Selection

I selected eight dual-career families fitting the Rapoport and Rapoport (1969, p. 3) definition of dual-career families. These were,

Families in which both husband and wife pursue careers (i.e., jobs which are highly salient personally, have a developmental sequence and require a high degree of commitment) and at the same time establish a family life with at least one child.

The number of families studied was eight to obtain two groups of four couples each of whose careers were either matched in flexibility or unmatched in flexibility. (Matched means both spouses having flexible or both having inflexible careers; unmatched means one spouse has a flexible and the other has an inflexible career.) The sample of eight couples seemed large enough to learn from and small enough to manage for a dissertation. Figure 1 reports spouses' occupations and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Wife's Occupation</th>
<th>Husband's Occupation</th>
<th>Children: Number and Ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>School vice-principal</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>One: four yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>College professor</td>
<td>College professor</td>
<td>Two: Seven yrs. and 18 mos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Certified public accountant</td>
<td>Landscape architect</td>
<td>Two: four yrs. and one yr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>College professor</td>
<td>College professor</td>
<td>One: five yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>One: five yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Business manager</td>
<td>Business manager</td>
<td>One: one yr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Two: eight yrs. and five yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
<td>Two: five yrs. and one yr.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Occupation of spouses and number and ages of children
number of children living at home for each family.

Because random sampling techniques would not readily identify
dual-career families who fit the research criteria, I used a purposive
sampling technique. I asked individuals contacted through personal
networks to provide the names of dual-career couples. These people in
turn provided the names of other dual-career couples. The process
continued until I identified eight couples who agreed to be informants.
The final sample, consequently, included couples who did not know
each other representing many professions.

Only families whose spouses were in full-time employment were
candidates for the study. My intent was to understand how full-time
career spouses shared and negotiated household and child care task
performance and responsibility. Having both heads of household
employed in careers presumably requiring a high degree of
commitment enabled comparison on other factors. Specifically, by
selecting spouses with comparatively equal career commitment, the
spouses were then theoretically able to give comparitively equal
commitment to domestic tasks.
To be eligible for the study, families were selected who had to have at least one child at home. The child(ren) had to be in the ten-and-under age group as live-in teenagers would complicate comparisons between families because teens more frequently do household tasks and care for young children (Brinkerhoff & White, 1981). Due to the child(ren)'s age requirement the families thus selected had spouses who were mostly in their thirties, with a few in their early forties.

Income was a selection factor in choosing a sample because relative income is important in negotiating family decisions. Parity in the spouse's contributions to family income was a requirement because if one member of the family contributes a much larger share of resources than the other, the larger contributor probably has the larger share of power in family negotiations (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Scanzoni, 1972, 1978, 1980b). Further, husbands traditionally earn more than wives and manifest more influence in decision-making (Scanzoni and Szinovacz, 1980). In order that I might assume power traceable to income to be equivalent, this study included only those families whose wives earned at least 40% of the total family income.
Co-Researchers

I served as principal investigator and conducted all interviews with a male co-researcher. The initial co-researcher was an acquaintance who had completed ethnographic methods courses as preparation for his own dissertation research. Two other co-researchers were also knowledgeable about ethnographic methods; and the fourth co-researcher had an extensive background in the study of gender issues.

Joint interviewers are considered to be superior to a single interviewer when conducting interviews with a family (Bechhofer, Elliott, & McCrone, 1984). The usefulness of a co-researcher was especially evident in two areas: (a) for building rapport with husband and wife, it was useful to have both a male and female researcher, and (b) researchers with somewhat different backgrounds served to temper each others’ subjectivity (Braithwaite, 1985).

We interviewed the family four times and observed them twice over a period of four to six weeks and developed a comfortable relationship with the families. During this time, the families came to
trust us to some extent--enough to tell us about their task negotiations, a fairly touchy subject for most of them. These negotiations, though often alluded to, were usually not actually described until the last meeting. The children were delightful and let us into the warmth of their friendship by the end of the first meeting. The relationship that we, the co-researchers, established with the families was cordial but professional.

The work of the co-researchers made possible a breadth of collection and interpretation of data that one researcher could not easily have obtained alone. Peshkin (1985: 279-280) noted,

...the researcher's biases are not allies.... [But] when others agree with my perceptions and interpretations, I believe I have achieved a creditable intersubjectivity, not a discreditable group illusion.

**Data Collection**

Interviews, participant observations, kinetic family drawings and researchers' notes and journals were the data sources. We collected data between the fall of 1986 through the summer of 1987.

The co-researchers interviewed each participating family using a format suggested by Spradley (1979). First, we held a get-acquainted
session that included the entire family and both researchers. Next, we interviewed the spouses separately. Finally, we interviewed the couple together. We audiotaped all sessions (for later transcription) and took notes during all sessions.

During the first interview the co-researchers asked the spouses to sign a consent form, an example of which is shown in Appendix A, and led a general discussion of household and child care tasks in the family. Typically, a researcher asked the spouses to comment in any way they would like about how they divided household and child care tasks. Additionally, we obtained general information about the family, mainly demographic data. The co-researchers were seeking to establish a friendly relationship with the family through these discussions.

Two participant observations took place between interviews one and two (Spradley, 1980). The first one was on a weekday evening; this permitted participation in a family task such as supper preparation and cleanup, and observation after the family completed the task. The second was on a weekend day; this allowed the interviewers to observe another set of tasks being performed.
During the participant observations, we gathered information on the following topics: who took ultimate responsibility for initiating, organizing, delegating and following up of household and child care tasks; who performed what household tasks; how the family carried out negotiations about tasks; and how each spouse’s employment flexibility or inflexibility affected task sharing. Appendix B presents guidelines for the participant observations.

For the second and third interviews, we covered the same topics as in the participant observations, but in more detail and with each spouse separately. Appendix C shows the questions that guided the second and third interviews.

For the final interview, the co-researchers asked questions about topics not clearly understood by them in the single interviews or the observations. We clarified divergent points of view that emerged in the separate interviews, although the spouses did not necessarily come to an agreement on these points. The co-researchers made no effort to induce a convergence.

In addition to the usual ethnographic techniques, I conducted a “kinetic family drawing” (Burns & Kaufman, 1970) during one
participant observation session with each family. This evaluative drawing technique requires a drawing by each of the family members (old enough to do so) of all the family members "*doing* something together" (Burns & Kaufman, 1970, p. 19). The drawings provided additional information about the family as perceived by each member.

The co-researchers recorded in journal notes personal reactions, feelings, impressions and conjectures about what was going on (Spradley, 1979). Both I and all of the co-researchers found journal writing difficult. This difficulty did not abate over the life of the project, yet the researchers remained convinced of the value of journal production.

In an attempt to overcome their difficulties with journal writing, the co-researchers always discussed personal reactions to the family after each session. These reactions were recorded in what I call an "electronic journal". The interviewers audiotaped the electronic journal privately after leaving each family interview or observation session. The conversations were informal, usually about one-half hour in length, and concerned whatever we were thinking at the moment. During the conversations, we tried out tentative assertions about the
family and sought corroboration from the other of what one of us thought we were seeing. These private discussions and the conjectures that came from them also led to the development of further questions to ask during the next session with the family.

Data Analysis Procedures

I applied Spradley's (1979, 1980) three-part procedures for the ethnographic analysis of qualitative data to the data collected at each interview and participant observation session. I first analyzed data sets resulting from interview and participant observation sessions using Spradley's techniques. These techniques break down text-based data into units, or "domains," that participants in the study recognized as meaningful.

After completing the domain analyses for each family, I constructed "vignettes" for each family's data set. I intended the vignettes, developed using methods recommended by Erickson (1986), to capture in brief the essential aspects of the data. In theory, the two analytical methods—dissection of data that occurs during domain analysis and the synthesis of data that occurs in vignette construction—complement each other and reveal the underlying
patterns of the data.

Assertions emerged from each of these two analyses: the domain analyses and the vignettes. Assertions represented repeatedly in different data sets and through different analysis techniques became this study’s findings.

I concentrated the analysis on the domains of household and child care tasks and responsibilities, and the people involved in them. In the first step of the domain analysis I listed all the tasks, responsibilities and people named by each family. (See Figure 2, the column on the left, for an example of a domain list of tasks and responsibilities.) Second, I considered the ways family members recognized items on the list as similar or different by family members. I then tried to identify the “dimensions of contrast” (Spradley, 1979) that seemed to best capture the distinctions that were made by family members. (The five category labels across the top of Figure 2 illustrate some dimensions of contrast.) In a third step and final step, I attempted to diagram the relationship of components of each domain (for an example, see Figure 3). I used these three steps to analyze the interview and participant observation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Urgent</th>
<th>Deferrable</th>
<th>S-M-L Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change diapers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dress child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respond to child</td>
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<td>Child to Dr.</td>
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<td>Child to sitter</td>
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<td>Child to class</td>
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<td>Play w/child</td>
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<td>Bathe child</td>
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<td>Buy child clothes</td>
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<td>First aid child</td>
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<td>Discipline child</td>
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<td>Read to child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comfort child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mow lawn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
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<td>Clean house</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sew</td>
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<td>Fix broken things</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trash out</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pay bills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buy gifts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food shopping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laundry: wash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laundry: put up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heavy cleaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>House repairs</td>
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<td>Care of pets</td>
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<td>Iron clothes</td>
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<td>Run errands</td>
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<td>Sort mail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintain car</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wash dishes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean refrigerator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule child Dr.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In touch w/ friends</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan family outings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decide finances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choose movies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Find sitter</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Domain list of tasks and responsibilities with dimensions of contrast
Figure 3. Components of task performance and responsibility
data for each family.

Vignette construction focused on significant family interactions that seemed to reveal the dynamic of family life centering on household tasks and responsibilities. I searched all data, both interview and participant observation, for evidence of these interactions. I then based the family vignette on the interactions, and recreated brief scenes of them. The results of vignette construction for each family are a set of examples of how the family "worked" with respect to household tasks.

I analyzed the kinetic art drawings by looking first at the family's process of art-making both from transcripts of what they said and from notes made at the time of the drawings. I then analyzed the drawings in two ways: for process and for content. Generally speaking, the process of executing a drawing, for instance, might illustrate how a family handles a novel task, revealing who takes responsibility for such a task and how the parents relate to the child(ren) during an art task. The content of some family drawings gave graphic representation of a task by one or more members. A comparative look at spouses' drawings showed, for instance, one
spouse had performed a household task or cared for a child while the other was involved in leisure activities. Drawings, then, provided data to be included with those emerging from the other methods, and the analysis of the drawings was added to the analysis package for each family.

Based on the completed analyses, I developed a list of "assertions", i.e., probable statements that are empirically testable, for each family and sought confirmation of them by rechecking the data. I then compared supported assertions across the eight families to identify patterns in the sample.

I analyzed the co-researchers' electronic journal in a different way. I included domains from this data set as another form of analysis for each family's portfolio. Thus, these data became an independent source of assertions to be compared with assertions from the participants' own data, for confirmation or disconfirmation.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability in ethnographic research addresses replicability of the study: whether the study can be replicated with the same results (external reliability); and whether multiple observers agree on the
results of a study, or another researcher would come up with the same results in a given study as the original researcher (internal reliability). Validity is also concerned with two things: whether researchers actually are observing what they think they are observing (internal validity); and the generalizability of the observations across groups (external validity).

**Triangulation.** I used multiple methods to triangulate findings about the informants: these were: (a) participant observation, (b) audiotaped interviews, (c) field notes, (d) kinetic family drawings, (e) two methods of data analysis, (f) two co-researchers and, (g) the electronic journal. Data triangulation is an important aspect of insuring both reliability and validity in ethnographic studies (Denzin, 1978; Goetze & LeCompte, 1984; Guba, 1979). Denzin (1978, p. 294) states that, "triangulation is the use of multiple methods in the study of the same object." Triangulation of data by the use of multiple methods affords multiple points on which the researcher may compare data about the same behavior. Triangulation of observers, as in this study, serves to remove possible bias that would come from the use of a single observer.
External reliability. External reliability of ethnographic family studies is threatened when sample selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures are not described well enough to be used, or are unlikely to be feasible, in other sites (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). For this study I took the following steps to ensure external reliability: (a) I specified the social conditions of the study, (b) I outlined the role of the co-researchers, (c) I reported the informant selection process, (d) I defined the concepts used in the study, (e) I clearly described the data collection process used, and (f) I carefully spelled out the data analysis procedures.

Social conditions and the social role of the interviewers are a threat to reliability if they are not understood, specified and repeatable (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Ethnographic researchers need to specify the social conditions or context of the research setting because “what people say and do varies according to others present at the time” (Goetze & LeCompte, 1984, p. 215). Project directors must specify interviewers’ roles and statuses so that replication of these can be approximated; this is necessary because the data generated depend somewhat on the relationship of the researchers to the
informants (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

I undertook a complete description of the whole project—including the theoretical constructs that informed it and data gathering and analysis techniques—to permit replication. If I or another researcher were to repeat this study in another location, using the same requirements for informants, I believe the results would be similar to, but not exactly the same as, those found in this study.

**Internal reliability.** Internal reliability is threatened when there is lack of agreement among multiple observers (Denzin, 1978; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). In this study, a co-researcher participated in all participant observation sessions and interviews with the primary researcher. After each session, my co-researcher and I performed an oral preliminary check to establish general agreement as to what had occurred in the session just completed. We kept our own notes in parallel throughout the data collection phase, and conferred at several points in the analysis to ensure that interpretations made by one were generally shared by the other.

I audiotape recorded all interviews and participant observation sessions and the tape transcriptions are available for review and
analysis by the co-researchers and others. When reporting on the study, I used informants' own words as often as possible to present the findings. These were taken from the audiotape transcriptions.

When analyzing the study, I consistently used Spradley's (1979) methods for data analysis. I organized into assertions all data that were relevant to the research questions.

In addition, my co-researchers and I checked frequently with the informants for confirmation or disagreement about what we thought we were observing. This was done both in joint and individual interviews with spouses.

**Internal validity.** Internal validity is concerned with whether observers are actually understanding and observing what they think they are understanding and observing (Denzin, 1978; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). I next detail some of the steps taken to minimize problems with internal validity.

The design of the study minimized possibly invalidating effects of history and maturation because the study took place over a short (eight month) period. The participants were unlikely to be affected by these threats as our time with each family was only a few weeks.
Two of the participants were considering major changes in their lives: one husband was considering quitting his job to stay at home and take care of his children; a wife was on the verge of quitting her job to become a full-time student. While these were possible threats in terms of history, the five sessions with each family provided us with enough data to observe changes in the family work of each family, and to understand the implications of these changes, and check these out with each family. Although the amount of time spent with the family was brief—approximately nine hours per family—the interactions were examined intensively by my co-researchers and I.

Observer effects were a serious consideration in this as in any other ethnographic study, and are to be expected noted and clarified. Observer effects consist of (a) reactivity, or the possibility that informants may react to being observed by presenting an ideal self or telling the researcher what they think the researcher wants to know, (b) distortions of information due to personal relationships which the informants and researchers develop which in turn might effect what the informants tell the researchers, (c) distortions due to researchers not representing participants meanings. Awareness at all times of
these possible threats was essential, and was repeatedly acknowledged in the electronic journal and clarified in interviews and by observations.

The co-researchers and I believed that by the final interview all the families had come to trust us and that reactivity was minimized. Observations of the families helped us understand whether there were differences between behaviors and participant self-reports. Discrepancies between data obtained from individual interviews with spouses were discussed and clarified in joint interviews with the spouses, helping to reveal any distortions of information. And, the co-researchers and I discussed our conceptions of family task sharing with the participants, which helped to pinpoint any co-researcher misunderstandings, and afforded us an opportunity to reevaluate their meanings. In addition, my principal assertions are supported by data from the informants.

I was biased toward egalitarian task-sharing, and was careful to question my judgments, and check the verbatim recordings of the interviews, in order to try to avoid bias in reporting task sharing in a family. Since this study employed two researchers, researcher
distortions were apparent more readily through our interactive mutual observation. Both self-awareness, noted in the audiotaped journals, and our mutual observation, tended to counteract problematic subjectivity and strengthened the study's internal validity.

Threats to internal validity were also lessened by the use of multiple methods (Denzin, 1978). This study's multiple methods were: (a) participant observation, (b) audiotaped interviews, (c) field notes, (d) kinetic family drawings, (e) two methods of data analysis, (f) two co-researchers and, (g) the electronic journal. Employing these methods of triangulation mitigated problems with bias that might have been induced by the use of a single method and enhanced the internal validity of this study.

External validity. This study addressed external validity, or generalizability in a number of ways. First, the project defined clearly the kind of family to be observed--the dual-career family--and the special requirements of this study for these families. I consider the chosen families as comparable to the larger population of such families. The dual-career families are from many professional fields; some are urban, some are rural families. The setting, social
conditions and characteristics of the families were defined. Then, when I produce statements and assertions I will assume tentative generalizability only to families who are of a similar slice of life, or as Knapp (1979, p. 126) states:

Patterns observed or extracted from the testimony of a few key informants are "generalized" by an inductive logic to all those sharing the same culture and participating in the same kinds of activities.

I will consider the findings of this study, however, as hypotheses about dual-career families (with certain characteristics that were specified clearly) to be tested in further research.
Chapter 4

Findings

I present the study's findings in six categories: (a) task performance and task responsibility, (b) standards relating to task sharing, (c) task negotiation, (d) flexibility of occupation and family life, (e) influences on task sharing, and (f) career commitment. These categories of findings are patterns that emerged from this research project, products of an intensive search of the data from the eight participating families. The co-researchers spent a total of 72 hours with the eight families; hundreds of additional hours were spent in analyzing more than 1300 pages of interview transcriptions and observation notes, from which the patterns were generated.

Half the patterns identified were answers to the initial research questions: these are findings (a), (c) and (d) noted above. The other half were patterns that emerged from the study as it progressed: these are findings (b), (e) and (f).

I will present the families along with the findings. I will introduce Families One, Two, Four, Six and Eight in the section on household and child care task performance and task responsibility.
Families Three, Five and Seven will be introduced in the section on standards.

Household and Child Care Task Performance and Task Responsibility

Task performance is the doing of a task. Responsibility for tasks differs from performance, yet it is difficult in many cases to separate sharply the responsibility for a task from its performance of the same task. It is easy to see the difference between deciding to save money for a family trip (task responsibility) and the actual task of depositing money regularly in a savings account (task performance). But what about the steps between deciding to save and making a deposit? Such steps as: (a) remembering to write a check; (b) actually writing it; (c) remembering to go to the bank; (d) and actually going to the bank or directing another family member to go to the bank. "Deciding" and "remembering" tell us that this is task responsibility; the actual doing of a task tells us it is task performance.

There are many aspects to a task activity. As in the case of saving money for a vacation, what seems at first to be a simple case of deciding to save and taking a check to the bank is actually a series of several discrete tasks compounded with several assumptions of
responsibility. Although task responsibility and task performance are intertwined phenomena, the two will be dichotomized to facilitate analysis.

Having the responsibility for a household is analogous to being the household's chief executive. In a study now regarded as a classic of the administrative science literature, Gulick & Urwick (1937), proposed the acronym PODSCORB to specify the functions of a chief executive of an organization. PODSCORB refers to planning, organizing, directing, staffing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting. In the introduction to the present study, I spoke of family responsibility as involving initiating, planning, organizing and reviewing household and child care tasks; and while budgeting and task allocation were not specified, they may be considered as part of the organizing aspect of family responsibility. The functions Gulick & Urwick describe fifty years earlier are very similar. A more recent characterization of business management (Trewatha & Newport, 1976) describes management as the process of "planning, organizing, actuating and controlling" (p. 22). Again, the elements listed are similar to those involved in taking responsibility for a family's tasks. Bracey,
Sandford and Quick (1986) even more recently described the management function as including planning, organizing, directing and controlling (p. 17), all similar to the household responsibility functions referred to throughout this study: initiating, planning, organizing and reviewing. The process of initiating family tasks implies that some tasks, especially those related to child care, are unique and must be introduced or initiated into the family system. Planning refers to all the preliminary thought that precedes a program of action. Organizing includes arranging a task, allocating the task, negotiating about the task and bringing order to the undertaking. And reviewing implies overseeing and evaluating the end result of task performance.

Responsibility for family tasks is a job that often goes unrewarded in our society and unrecognized by researchers--many of whom tend to study task performance only. The job of responsibility is extensive, time-consuming, complex and important to the welfare of a family. Responsibility must be given its place beside task performance in the overall understanding of what it means to manage household functions.
Sharing of tasks. The review of the literature on dual-career and dual-earner families examined many studies of task sharing in dual-career families. But this study's findings differ from what one could reasonably extrapolate or infer from that literature--with the possible exception of Gilbert (1985): the families in this study shared more tasks than the literature had led me to expect.

From the entire study group of eight families, two families shared the family work load equally and thus will be called “sharers”. (The family work load includes task performance + task responsibility.) I describe five of the families as striving to share the family work load equally; they will be called “strivers”. The wives in these five families still took up a larger portion of that load than the husbands--a quantitative estimate would be 10-15% larger. In the one remaining family, the wife had a much larger family work load than her husband, perhaps 30% larger and this family is characterized as a “worker/helper” family. Figure 4 summarizes the work-sharing characteristics of the families.

The sharers. The two families that share the family work load equally are Family Two, Virginia Shepherd and Tom Walters, and
Sharers:

Family Two     Virginia Shepherd and Tom Walters; Jeff and Jeremy.
Family Eight    Melanie and Dave Sanderson; Sarah and Jonathan

Strivers:

Family One      Susan Anderson and Rob Davis; Will
Family Three     Margaret and Greg Jefferson, Mark and Kara
Family Four      Clair Scott and Fred Black; Katy
Family Five      Janet Sinclair and James Wade; Mike
Family Seven     Hannah and Kevin Miller; David and Anne

Worker/helper:

Family Six       Julie and Jim Moore; Alicia

Figure 4. The eight families and their work sharing characteristics
Family Eight, Melanie and Dave Sanderson. I present the
characteristics of the two kinds of work-sharing families are in
Figure 5. I refer to the Shepherd/Walters family as Type "A", a family
characterized by the sharing of all household task performance and
responsibility across gender lines. Each spouse can do almost
everything the other can do, and they both make an effort to share
everything. They contribute equally to the family income, too.
Families of this type have been referred to as "egalitarian" families
(Epstein, 1971; Garland, 1972; Gronseth, 1975), or "symmetrical"
(Young & Wilmott, 1973). I will use the term egalitarian in this
report.

The egalitarian family, Virginia Shepherd and Tom Walters, and
their sons Jeff, 7, and Jeremy, 18 months, find living in the country
compatible with the needs of their family. They have chosen this
environment so that when not at their jobs as college professors, they
can concentrate on their two young sons. The parents use their
weekend time to jointly accomplish tasks around the house that need
doing.

Virginia comments on the effort the spouses make to avoid
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<th>Type A:</th>
<th>Type B:</th>
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<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td>Quasi-traditional</td>
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<td>Family Two:</td>
<td>Shares all tasks across gender lines</td>
<td>Family Eight:</td>
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<td>Many tasks are performed along traditional gender lines; share some tasks across gender lines (child care and cleaning)</td>
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Figure 5. Characteristics of two types of Sharer families
dividing tasks along gender lines:

We actually work at not doing that. . . . When he wants to go do something or work on some of the house, I may not feel like doing it then, but I will go ahead and do it then because I want to learn how to do it. He knows more about engines than I do. When he's working on engines I go out there and try to learn what he is doing. I can't always do everything that he can do, when he's doing it. I don't have as much arm strength as he does. Sometimes I have to have him do those things. But I try to learn how to do it. One thing, in our washing machine, the filters get clogged up sometimes. The first few times when it happened, when we moved into our house, he always [unclogged them]. One time I was there washing clothes and he was some place else, so it got clogged up. I decided then I wanted to learn how to do that. I do it.

Tom agrees that they share tasks as equally as possible and adds,

That's the biggest thing that stands out in our minds, is that neither one of us is afraid to share all the things that go on. Neither of us minds jumping in and doing anything that is there. It's nothing like it's women's work or men's work. We both appreciate the fact that there are things neither of us likes to do; if we both do everything then we're going to get to do the things we like to do as well.

Virginia believes that one reason they are able to share tasks so easily is this:

I think that the important thing about that [is that] I don't take for granted he is going to do something and he doesn't take for granted I am. Occasionally we do and we have to say, "Now wait a minute, I don't want to do that anymore". . . . We look at each other like when the telephone rings. We look at each other to see who is doing something that really can't
be stopped. I think we look at each other and we know what the other one is doing. We don't have a whole lot of verbal cues. We just know when it is our turn to do.

Tom believes he understands why their sharing works so well:

I always like to think...you put yourself in a position of always thinking what the other person might want, you know, if you were in their position. Consider yourself in someone else's position and how you'd react if you were [them]--that is what I'm saying, and that's why the sharing works so well.

This couple's task interactions are so smooth and effective that they appeared to the researchers to have been choreographed. When this was pointed out to Virginia she replied:

In some ways I guess it is choreographed because we make a point of trying to take turns doing things. We take turns as to who gets up in the middle of the night with Jeremy... And we do take turns doing things not only with the kids but when one of us can't be home at the same time as the other one, we sort of take turns as to who starts dinner and that kind of stuff. We take turns as to who puts which kid to bed. It is sort of choreographed; we really try to take turns at it.

Tom agrees with the characterization of their task sharing as choreographed:

That's probably not inaccurate. We complement each other in a lot of different ways. We've always talked and [each] of us takes the lead at different times. Not just in a few hours, but on the whole. There will be days when one of us will jump in and lead on the cooking and feels comfortable
that day doing that. The other one will pick up on other things and it sort of shifts. It's not something where we say, "I'm going to do this" It's something that sort of shifts.

Sharing of tasks simultaneously (as well as complementarily) is a frequent occurrence in the Shepherd/Walters household. The co-researchers observed the spouses cooking a meal and simultaneously caring for the children, an event which also appeared to have been choreographed. Tom talks about this,

We just jump in and we're both sort of in there feeding in at different times doing different things... The kids are right in the middle of things and we're right in the middle of things; and you're sharing, you're doing it all together.

Child care tasks are an important consideration for Tom and Virginia. Tom relates,

Whoever happens to get dressed in the morning the quickest, whatever stage Jeremy is at as far as diaper change, then one feeds him and does that... The night before we lay out everything that Jeff needs and get out his books and stuff... What we also do, is alternate [so that] every other night, one of us will read to Jeff, and the other will read to Jeremy. It's sort of a chance for us to have some time with them individually. It alternates. So every night we keep track. That's one thing we do keep track of.... When we're both there we try to alternate so, instead of doing it together, it gives us a little time personally with them when we can share things.
An indicator of the frequency and depth of sharing of child care in this family is this: the younger child calls both parents “Daddy” when he wants one of them, and is perfectly satisfied to have either of them respond to his call.

The spouses also share by doing together, alternating or dividing these aspects of child care: taking the children to the doctor, taking them to and from the sitter, playing with them, disciplining the children, giving first aid to the children, attending to a child’s problem, getting up in the middle of the night with Jeremy, responding to and helping their children, directing the children, listening to Jeff read to them at night and monitoring the children’s safety and activities.

Other shared tasks are cooking, grocery shopping, running errands, laundry, cleaning the house, taking care of the animals, ironing, buying gifts, mowing the grass, changing the oil in the cars, keeping in touch with friends and inviting people over to their house.

Although the spouses share house cleaning, they may carry out different phases of it. Tom describes,

I probably do more floor cleaning. Virginia does more
bathrooms and I do more floors. . . . For some reason it's broken out that way with no intention. For some reason, when it comes to other things like the kitchen, we sort of split it, but when it comes to mopping the kitchen floor or doing a lot of the vacuuming, even though she does it sometimes, it just seems like that sort of breaks out as one of my things. And what breaks out for her is usually cleaning up the bathroom, and I don't know why that is.

Turning now to the spouses' responsibility for the household and child care tasks, the story is much the same as for task performance. Tom and Virginia both monitor the children equally and respond to their needs equally, and with consideration of the other. Virginia reports of Tom that, "He is as much aware of anything that goes on in that house and [with] the kids as I am" She goes on to say, "And when one of us feels bad, the other one always takes over more of the responsibility."

Virginia may be more of the family planner and initiator of social events. Tom says,

She makes lists and she figures out ways of doing things. That's sort of a take off on a lot of our lab work, where we've had to organize lab situations and design experiments. . . . she is more of a leader as far as getting us to do things, which I enjoy the heck out of when I get into it. But, I'm not an initiator.

But, Tom may be more of an initiator of family home projects.
Virginia recounts,

[Tom] initiates them more than I do. We usually do those, work on them together, but [he] usually starts. Like last night, I wasn’t there because I had class till six, but...he moved all the furniture around so we could put our wood stove in. And went down and moved the antenna wire. I probably wouldn’t mind the antenna wire but he jumped on that and did that last night. Either one of us could have done it, but he did it.

As the foregoing illustrates, Virginia and Tom appear willing and eager to share anything and everything with each other. For them, constant communication, empathy and a willingness to share everything creates an environment in which tasks are performed smoothly and considerately.

The egalitarian Shepherd/Walters family is one of two types of sharers identified in this study. The other type—B—is now described.

Family Eight, the Sandersons, Melanie and Dave, their five year old daughter Sarah, and 18 month-old-son Jonathan, are the second couple who share the total family work. I refer to them as type “B” in Table 5, and call them “quasi-traditional”. The Latin term “quasi” is defined as “seemingly”, thus quasi-traditional means “seemingly” traditional, a designation that fits the Sandersons: they divide many tasks along
traditional gender lines, yet Dave crosses over and performs many household and child care tasks. Thus, this couple shares the total household work load equally, but differently from the Shepherd/Walters. Both spouses contribute equally to the family income.

The Sanderson family is active. Melanie is employed as an administrator in a large government agency. She is also working on a Ph. D. at a nearby university. Dave is a special education teacher in a nearby school district. He has completed all classes toward a Ph. D. Both spouses work full-time at their jobs, but Dave has 10 weeks off in the summer, when he takes care of the children. The spouses are busy with the children, and with household tasks, shopping, some extracurricular activities, church attendance and visiting with friends. Their pace, while busy, is not hectic: it seems purposeful and child-centered.

Melanie does many chores inside the house: she cooks dinner, cleans up the kitchen after dinner, makes lunches for the family and sees that everyone has clean clothes for the next day. Her less frequent chores include fixing broken things, going through boxes for
seasonal clothing changes, planting flowers in the yard and cleaning out the refrigerator.

Dave takes care of most out-of-doors chores: he mows the lawn, trims shrubs and maintains the cars. He also cooks breakfast, does large cleaning jobs, makes house repairs, and lets in service persons. Dave transports the children to daycare, bathes the children at night, keeps the children all day long during his summer break from teaching and drives their daughter to gymnastics.

The Sandersons share many tasks; they may be either shared simultaneously or divided and performed at different times. Melanie relates:

Washing would be both of us...Child care is both of us... things like transporting [children] to and from day care has been Dave. Getting ready for bed and stuff is pretty much of a joint [activity]...Dave will say "I'll go get the tub rolling while you clean up the mess"...Things like buying clothes we often do that all together. I guess I might say "So and so needs such and such", or things like "We're out of this" or whatever, but we frequently go as a family outing--that goes for all our clothes really.

The spouses share such other household tasks as making out the grocery list, running errands, buying gifts for family and friends and dealing with junk mail. Child care tasks they share are seeing that the
children are dressed in the morning, rendering first aid to children,
disciplining the children, reading to them, comforting them, getting up
at night with a child, taking the children for doctor's appointments,
monitoring (babysitting) the children, playing with them, putting the
children to bed and changing their son's diapers.

Task responsibility, while shared, falls preponderantly into
Melanie's purview. She reports:

Probably I do a lot of the organizing in terms of planning
things, or scheduling types of things... Scheduling routine
[doctor's] appointments, I usually do... again just because I
keep a better track of the calendar and what we've got going
on... Any arrangements in terms of babysitting--I do the
calling and getting that lined up.

Dave concurs with Melanie that she is the family planner and adds:

I think it's what we do the best. We know what we do best
or what we do comfortably. We talk about the organiza-
tion--that's just something that comes naturally to Melanie.
It doesn't come naturally to me.

Melanie plans meals and what clothing items the children will
wear, decides what gifts are appropriate for family and friends and
initiates visits with them. She is very efficient and was observed
doing many kinds of organizing during a given time period: clipping
coupons, preparing lunch, planning the afternoon's trip, wrapping a gift
and talking to their daughter. Dave takes responsibility for deciding when yard work needs to be done and when cars need to be taken for servicing.

The spouses share joint child care responsibility for: monitoring (babysitting) of the children, playing with them, calling the doctor if a child is ill and disciplining the children. (Dave takes responsibility for the children as opposed to "helping out" with them.) Vacation planning and financial decision-making are done jointly.

The spouses share tasks in several ways. Usually they tend to perform tasks separately but simultaneously. They perform other tasks jointly, such as putting the children to bed or doing family shopping. At times one spouse will watch the children so that the other can do some task.

The husband and wife equally share the total household and child care work load—that is, they each take approximately half of the total of both household and child care task performance and responsibility work. Melanie believes that,

To me, I think on a given day one of us might do more [tasks and responsibilities] than the other, but really, I think in the whole scheme of things it balances out.
Dave adds,

I think that we both know that, sort of, when the situation comes that one of us works harder than the other or may have done more tasks, it's either because of circumstances or whatever--I don't think we keep score.

Sharing the total work load is more important to this family than who takes more responsibility or who performs more tasks. Melanie assumes more responsibility as has been pointed out. Dave, however, performs more tasks. This results in an approximately equal sharing of the total work load, not in an approximately equal sharing of the separate areas of task performances and task responsibilities.

I have described the two families who share the total work load and have presented their differences in style of task-sharing. Next, I will discuss another type of couple found in this study. This pattern is found in five couples who share a great deal of the family work load, but do not share it quite as equally as the two couples just discussed.

**The strivers.** The five couples who make up the "strivers" are all consciously committed to sharing the work load. They come close to sharing tasks equally, yet the women take somewhat more responsibility for household and child care tasks than their husbands.
One of these couples attempts to share in the egalitarian mode that characterized the Shepherd/Walters (Type A) household. The other four couples are striving for sharing in what this study calls the quasi-traditional (Type B) mode.

Family Four, Clair Scott and Fred Black, are a couple who exemplify the striver category. Their lives are filled primarily with their work as academics, in its various aspects, and with caring for their daughter Katy, who is five, and secondarily with household tasks and responsibilities. They sometimes engage in social or recreational activities as well. They enjoy music and reading while at home.

Clair and Fred have recently renegotiated their household and child care tasks (more on this in the section on task negotiation), and they now split the evening chores in this way: they divide up 1) fixing the evening meal (which includes doing the dishes afterwards), and 2) taking care of their daughter (which includes seeing to her bath and putting her to bed). They plan this task division weekly, and each spouse will take each task several times a week. The spouses find that planning weekly task allocation and task responsibility helps them to equalize the work load. If they do not plan, many more of the
tasks/responsibilities tend to go, by default, to Clair.

Clair does some tasks for their daughter. As she states,

I tend to pick up on what Katy needs at particular points, for example: cleaning up her room, knowing when to put her things in her drawers and knowing she has clean clothes, noting what needs to be done so far as getting her dressed, buying clothes or taking her to the doctor.

Clair's statement contains a mixture of child care tasks and responsibilities, reflecting the intermixture of the two.

Other tasks that Clair performs are buying presents for children in the family, constructing furniture for the house and executing large household cleaning jobs.

Fred performs some tasks for their daughter: he prepares her school snacks and her breakfast. Other tasks he does are maintaining the outside of the house and the cars. He sees to it that the lawn is mowed, takes out the garbage and cleans the bathroom. Fred is the person responsible for family business matters. He recounts:

Anything having to do with official papers and keeping track of records, and this kind of thing tends to go through my desk....taking care of car registration, taking care of school papers, official documents for school, making sure we change hospital plans....and basic financial planning in general is in my lap....I do the taxes....the paperwork, the administration.
Like Clair, Fred also speaks of a mixture of tasks and responsibilities.

Many other tasks relating to their daughter are shared. Clair believes that “One of the things we share pretty well is parenting.” Both parents answer the child’s questions, supervise her bath, play with her, discipline her, read to her, take her to and from the sitter and both (alternately) put her to bed. Another task they share on a regular basis is food shopping.

Clair has the primary responsibility for the child and her welfare. Some of these responsibilities are mentioned above: she is responsible for Katy’s needs and for what Katy wears. Also, in relation to household tasks, she is the one who decides when the lawn needs mowing.

Responsibilities that the spouses share on a regular basis are: deciding when the house needs painting, about financial matters, and what movies and plays to see; and planning the itinerary for trips and for family outings. The spouses do not put a high priority on having a clean house. Fred related that the spouses share “irresponsibility” for housecleaning. Clair rejoined this remark with, “We share the blame.”

In almost all aspects of household task performance the spouses
share the load and they share much responsibility for tasks as well.

But it's Clair's assumption of the general responsibility for their daughter that tips the scale toward her carrying more of the total work load in this family.

Another family exemplifying the strivers is Family One. They are Susan Anderson, Rob Davis and their son Will, who is four. This family lives in a country cottage among the Allegheny mountains at the end of a long, spectacular ride into the countryside. Susan is an elementary school principal in a nearby city. She is an energetic woman who teaches night classes several times a year and shows their dogs once or twice a month. Rob is employed at an engineering firm also in a nearby city. He is rather quiet in contrast to Susan. His interests are in hiking, wild animals and mycology. Will, their son, attends pre-school and daycare in a nearby town.

Rob sees certain chores as having become his over the years:

[I do] the firewood and any kind of auto related things. If the car gets washed I did it, and if it's broken, I have to get it fixed. I also do the trash, I have to take it to the dumpster...I'm the one that pretty much balances the checkbook. I used to be comptroller but I think Susan likes the checkbook now so she pays the bills right now...One more thing...I do maybe 90% of the bedtime story reading.
In addition to these tasks, Rob waters plants in the garden, takes walks with their son, tends to the wood and kerosene stoves, cleans out the refrigerator, shops for groceries and other household items, takes care of their son on weekends while Susan shows their dogs and he makes outside house repairs.

Many tasks fall primarily to Susan. She reports some of these:

I do more manual tasks... I do the major tasks, make the beds, wash the clothes; maintenance--I'm the maintenance department... changing the linens, switching [Will's] bed every day... I'll wash, dry, put away the clothes... I do yard work, again, 80% of the time. I do dog maintenance 90% of the time... 90% of the time I mop the floors.

Other tasks which Susan performs are the gardening, ironing clothes, cleaning the toilet and washing dishes.

A number of tasks--many child care tasks among them--are shared more or less equally. Susan relates,

Rob takes walks with [Will]. I think Rob plays with him more than I do. Will just basically joins in on any activity that I'm doing, like if I'm cooking he can cook with me and if I'm folding clothes he can do that. If I'm vacuuming, he can do that, but it's really like a play activity.

Rob adds to this:

... I generally take Will to one of your child care things... we have a woman in our neighborhood who keeps him on
Monday, Wednesday and Friday and I take him to her house about ten after seven... And two days a week Will goes to preschool in [the city] and Susan takes him... and then picks him up at 4:30... And then Susan returns home.

Other child care tasks that are shared are dressing Will, answering his questions, comforting him, taking him to the doctor or dentist, disciplining him and bathing him. Additional household tasks that Susan and Rob share are cooking (which she does more frequently than he), heavy cleaning, sewing, mending and buying gifts.

The spouses approach their tasks very differently. Rob is deliberate: he thinks about a task before doing it; Susan jumps right in and seems to enjoy the work. Susan believes she does more tasks than Rob due to her higher energy level—she "gets it done faster".

Task performance appears to be shared almost equally. Turning to task responsibility, however, the story is somewhat different.

Susan is the administrator and planner, according to Rob. She has a high energy level and delegates and schedules tasks with verve. Rob commented on her planning abilities:

Yeah, any opportunity for her, she would delegate. She has no problem delegating tasks. Susan's an administrator. She has a much higher energy level than I do... she's really motivated to do a lot and she delegates tasks. She's willing to schedule and mark the calendar if we're doing this...
and that and she plans weeks and months ahead. She’s working on next summer’s vacation now already and she’s a big planner.

If Susan is too busy to call and make a doctor’s appointment for their son, for example, she delegates this task to her husband. Or, if preparing a meal, at which she is very efficient, Susan delegates tasks to her husband to help her with the meal, and she monitors and respond to their son. In addition to scheduling their son with the doctor and dentist, initiating visits with friends and planning family outings, she is the general overseer of almost all of the family activities.

In contrast, Rob has one main family responsibility. He makes out the family grocery list.

The spouses share jointly the responsibility for: keeping up with family birthdays and sending cards; deciding about finances; deciding what movies to see or restaurant to got to; finding a babysitter; monitoring their son; and deciding about vacations.

Rob and Susan do not equally share the total work load. They share family task performance. In terms of responsibility for family tasks, however, Rob participates mostly as a helper or co-decider. The additional amount of time Susan spends taking responsibility for tasks
makes her the person responsible for slightly more than half of the total family work load.

The families presented exemplify the "striver" category. The five families in this category are different from each other in many ways, but are similar in their striving to equally share the total family work load although they may fall short of achieving this goal.

One family in this study was further from equal sharing of the family work load than the other families. I now present Family Six who fall into a separate category which is now presented.

Worker/helper. The final category is that of "worker/helper" and there is only one family to which this designation applies. They are the Moores: Julie and Jim and their daughter Alicia, who is one. This family does not qualify for the striver category because Julie does more of the household and child care task performance and takes more of the responsibilities than does Jim. She is clearly the worker and he the helper.

The Moores live in an older brick house in an established residential area of a small town. The family moved to this area less than a year ago, and both assumed new jobs; his was a promotion with
the same company and hers was a new company for her. Jim's
employer helped locate a job for Julie in an effort to accommodate the
Moore's dual-career marriage. The spouses both work in large firms as
medium-level managers.

The Moores divide tasks this way: Jim takes care of the outside
tasks, the trash and of the cars; Julie takes care of the inside tasks
and of the child—with Jim's help. Besides the tasks mentioned above,
Jim takes their daughter to daycare, pays bills, shops for hardware,
cooks dinner most of the time, feeds the dogs in the morning, irons his
own shirts and sorts the mail. He also does major indoor redecorating
projects. He rises early on Saturday morning with their daughter so
his wife can sleep late.

Julie does more of the tasks associated with caring for their child:
she feeds, bathes, and dresses her, changes her bed, administers first
aid, disciplines her and watches over her—most of the time. When
Julie is home she cares for Alicia while doing other chores. She
relates,

...it's just harder when you're watching her, like if you're
cleaning up the bathroom, dusting or something, you've got her
playing you know, she's not happy with things; it's just more
time consuming.

Except for planting and raking leaves, most of Julie's work is indoors or involves shopping. Other tasks she does are run family errands; buy groceries; purchase clothes for their child; wash, fold and put away laundry; clean bathrooms; change beds; buy or make most of the gifts they give; sew, mend and iron her own clothes; she also does the larger part of vacuuming and washing dishes.

Jim shares with Julie: getting their daughter ready for daycare in the morning, playing with and reading to her. He also shares the care of the dogs. Julie reports they split up the suppertime tasks, and "...if I'm [tending Alicia] he'll make dinner." Occasionally they will switch and Jim will feed Alicia and Julie will prepare dinner.

Household tasks seem to belong to Julie primarily unless she expressly makes another arrangement with Jim. For instance, Julie remarked with pleasure that, "He cleaned the house for me so I didn't have to do it today."

Jim explained: "We had a realtor come through yesterday so I cleaned up the house. She was out getting her hair done."

Both parents are involved in caring for the child, but just as Julie
performs more of the tasks of caring for Alicia, she too has the major responsibility for those tasks; Jim appears to take responsibility for the child only when he is alone with her or when Julie asks him to do so. Julie nurtures the child, makes medical appointments for her, instructs her and keeps her safely within bounds; Julie decides how Alicia's needs for food, clothing, cleanliness and safety will be met. In addition to these major child care responsibilities, the wife takes responsibility for seeing that these household tasks are completed: housecleaning, laundry, dishes, shopping and shopping lists; and she is responsible for household needs, for needs of her husband for special food and sundry items, for the child if she becomes ill and for keeping in touch with both their parents.

Jim is responsible for deciding when he does yardwork and for the looks and general maintenance of the cars. Responsibilities the Moores share are planning vacations, making financial decisions and decisions regarding redecorating.

Julie obviously has far more responsibilities than Jim, especially those associated with their child. Jim says, "...taking care of Alicia is a big element of work. I would say that Julie does that 80% of the
time." Caring for Alicia involves both tasks and responsibilities.
Thus, Julie performs more household and child care tasks than Jim
does and is responsible for many more tasks; therefore she assumes
more of the total work load than he. A rough estimate would be that
Julie does 65-70% of the total household work load and Jim does
30-35% of it.

The three identified patterns of sharing are based on the overall
family style of sharing. The next topic will document the distribution
of 34 tasks and responsibilities between both spouses in each of the
eight families.

Eight families task allocation for selected tasks and
responsibilities. Figure 6 summarizes all sixteen spouses' degree of
participation in 34 tasks and eight task responsibilities. Thirteen
items relate to child care; 21 items relate to household tasks; eight
items relate to household and child care responsibilities.

Across all families, wives more often performed 46% of the child
care tasks; 30% of the child care tasks were shared; the husbands
more often performed 23% of the child care tasks. For household
tasks, wives performed 57% of them more often than husbands; 5% of
Key: 1 = husband does all; 2 = husband does most; 3 = shared; 4 = wife does most; 5 = wife does all; 6 = hired; 7 = not applicable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Family One</th>
<th>Family Two</th>
<th>Family Three</th>
<th>Family Four</th>
<th>Family Five</th>
<th>Family Six</th>
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Figure 6. Summary of wives' and husbands' household and child care task performance and responsibility for all eight families
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<tr>
<th>Task</th>
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<th>Family Three</th>
<th>Family Four</th>
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<td>Run errands</td>
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<td>Wash dishes</td>
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</table>

Figure 6 continued
tasks were shared; and 38% of the tasks were assumed more often by husbands. Seventy-five percent of household and child care responsibilities were performed more often by wives and 25% were shared.

Next, I will present several topics that relate to task-sharing. The first of these is intentionality.

**Intentionality.** Couples vary in their intentionality regarding tasks: some couples plan how they will share; others, like the Jeffersons, "just do it."

Family Four, Clair Scott and Fred Black have become very intentional about tasks in order to share them more equitably. Clair tends to be aware of household and child care tasks that need doing. She will often make up a list and the spouses will divide up the chores on the list. Fred comments on this:

> When we don't say, "you're responsible for this area"...or "this is the timetable", it always seems like it could be done some other time. I'm not quite sure what my responsibility is anyway....I end up thinking "Well, I've just got to finish such and such a project." And I never get around to [tasks].... If we don't have assignments, particularly if I don't have an assignment, Clair ends up acting first on that task, household tasks.
Household and child care tasks are handled with greater ease and are distributed more equitably when the Scott/Black family is intentional about them. Both husband and wife know what tasks they are expected to do and they do the tasks assigned to them in their mutually worked out agreement.

Another household management topic that bears on task sharing is that of hiring paid help.

Paid help. Three of the eight families employ help with their household and/or child care tasks. Family Three, the Jeffersons, had just hired a sitter/housekeeper full time to care for their two young children and do much of the housework.

Margaret described their life before hiring full-time help:

Well, I think it [had] just gotten to the point...where I just had to wear roller skates all the time to keep up. What we've been doing lately, if [Greg] has to work late, is I'll work till 5, pick up the kids and come home and start supper, feed Kara and try to cook something for us and he stays late and works until 6, 6:30,7, something like that. Then he comes in and we eat and then I leave and go back to work and he cleans up the dishes and puts the kids to bed. It's just like this all the time. We never have time to sit down.

Greg adds: "We just flat don't have any free time to do anything."
The Jeffersons were so busy before hiring the sitter/housekeeper that Greg had decided to quit his job and stay home and take care of the children and housework. Just before he quit his job, he and Margaret decided to try having full time help to see if that would give them some relief from their hectic existence. Greg describes a benefit of having the sitter/housekeeper after she had been with them one week:

I really like being able to spend time with the kids, being with them, not having to necessarily be taking care of them, just spend time with them. Before our sitter, I'd have to be fighting [Kara] while I tried to do the vacuuming.

Families Seven and Eight, the Millers and Sandersons, both have their houses cleaned by paid help. Both families have hired a cleaning service to take care of housecleaning once a week. They find this to be helpful in relieving work overload for both of the spouses.

In all three cases, but especially for the Jeffersons, hiring paid help relieves some work overload and makes their lives less busy, affording them some time for non-task family activities.

I will now present a final influence on task sharing strategies. It relates to the wives' energy levels.
Energy level. Two of the wives--Susan Anderson and Margaret Jefferson--display energy levels exceptionally higher than their husbands. No husbands have higher energy levels than wives.

Susan believes she does more tasks than her husband, Rob, due to her higher energy level--or as she puts it, she "gets it done faster."

Rob states, "She has a much higher energy level than I do....she's real motivated to do a lot..."

Margaret is a person who can work a 70 hour week and fix supper every night and have energy left to take care of her children. She was observed doing many kinds of tasks at one time quickly and efficiently while her husband, who is more deliberate, accomplished fewer tasks. Margaret has tremendous energy and, like Susan, just finishes chores faster.

The assertion is that spouses with higher energy levels do more tasks in a given time period than their spouses with lower energy levels.

The next category of findings is about spouses' standards for household and child care tasks. I will present these now.
Standards

Each pair of spouses disclosed similar standards for household and child care tasks. The researchers found some variation in standards between spouses, as well as a remarkable closeness. I will discuss the differing standards of three families.

Family Five, Janet Sinclair and James Wade and their son Mike, reside in a contemporary house in a newly established subdivision in a small town. They drive a fairly new European car and have just purchased an older, second-hand, large American car for basic transportation to work.

The house—which they had built for them recently—is attractively furnished. Outside there is a newly-laid patio, new grass, and much work remaining to be done on the hillside behind the house.

Janet Sinclair, an energetic and warm person, works at a public health agency and is enrolled in graduate school at a nearby university. James Wade is a professional who administers a local government agency in a nearby town. Their son, Mike, is four and attends nursery school. Both spouses work full time at their jobs; Mike is in daycare after school. Most evenings and weekends James looks after Mike
while Janet prepares for classes and for preliminary exams and works on research for her graduate thesis.

This family's time is filled with professional work, housework, graduate studies and child care. A sense of purposeful activity pervades the household; this is especially apparent in Janet's behavior. Janet is always on the go: to work, to study, or working in the house.

Janet's and James' standards for household dirt and clutter are different. James will spend several hours a weekend vacuuming and straightening up the house. He says,

I'm a little... neater... So I clean up more and she does it when she thinks it needs to be done.... I mean I can't stand seeing it messy, so I will do it.

Being "more anxious" than his wife about cleaning, he cleans more. He also likes to keep their bedroom neat, while Janet is more inclined than James to have the kitchen clean.

Hannah and Kevin Miller, Family Seven, and David, eight and Anne, five, live in a comfortable home located on the outskirts of a small city. The house is surrounded by tall trees and with a view of a pastoral scene visible from their porch. The neighborhood has many amenities: a pool for the children, a nearby shopping center and bus
service into the city. The family owns two cars and a recreational vehicle and maintains a boat at a nearby lake.

The Miller house is large with a deck at the back of the house. In the interior, antiques are interspersed with functional pieces such as a sofa and a piano. Original prints hang on the walls.

Hannah Miller, who shares a law practice with a partner, has a direct gaze and straightforward manner. Kevin is employed in a nearby town as an engineer with a manufacturing company. Tall and relaxed in manner, he likes to be involved in sports. David, their son, is seven and loves sports also. Anne will enter kindergarten this year.

Both spouses are employed full-time. They do not usually bring work home with them although Hannah will sometimes return to work in the evening or on a weekend afternoon. The spouses spend most of their non-working time with their children: they enjoy recreation with the children, perform household and child care tasks while keeping an eye on the children and take them along to some social functions.

The discrepancies between Kevin's and Hannah's standards for household and child care tasks are greater than those between the
other seven couples. Kevin notices that general household standards
differ between Hannah and him. He reports,

I tend to like things, let's see, I tend to get frustrated by
messy things, but dust and things like that don't bother me... .What happens is things tend to build up and then I... go
through the house frustrated and putting things away. But
there seems to be sort of a minimum level at which I can
live.

Hannah agrees:

...I like it neater than he does. But you know, that's not
entirely right, I sort of keep things, I like things kept up
as you go along. And Kevin would be, he's more the type
where he'll wait till it's totally trash and he'll throw a
total fit and clean up the whole thing.

Regarding another standard, Hannah thinks she is less lenient than
her husband with the children and that they then take advantage of
him. She relates, "He's just more lenient with them on most
everything."

Family Three, Margaret and Greg Jefferson, and their children
Mark, three, and Kara, a one-year-old, reside in a small southern city,
their house a neat brick split level in a pleasant neighborhood.
Antiques are among the house's attractive furnishings. The house's
deep back yard contains a patio, a tree house and play equipment for
the children.

Margaret Jefferson is a certified public accountant employed by a large firm. Greg Jefferson is a landscape architect employed in the same city as his wife. The spouses' firms routinely expect them to work very long hours and some weekends. Mark is a very active child, not yet in preschool. Kara is still a toddler who requires constant watching.

Margaret and Greg have quite similar standards, differing only slightly about housecleaning. Greg says: "I'm into neatness and she's into cleaning." He adds to this,

I don't like messes. I don't care if the carpet has a little dirt on it. I don't like paper and stuff like that laying all over the top of it. Or like that table, that bugs me and it doesn't bug her, I don't think.

Margaret agrees and adds:

That's pretty much true; like he would come in and pick up all the toys and I would come in and try to get the spot out of the carpet, but the toys I would leave alone.

The spouses use different standards to interpret Mark's behavior.

According to Greg,

We had kind of a struggle between Margaret and me for a while. Mark worked us against each other... If I had him
here at home by myself in the evenings--like during tax season, I take care of him by myself--and I've never had much trouble. . . . Now if Margaret puts him to bed he knows he can stretch it, see. So usually if I let her put him to bed then we'll sit down there until 10 or 11 o'clock [and he is] still coming back down and we were having a real problem with that for a while. Finally, Margaret agreed, you know, it was a little more than she could handle and when the two of us were here one of us had to take, be in charge of, the discipline. That was sort of how we dealt with it. . . . Before, she and I would end up fighting like if one was handling the discipline, the other one would interfere, maybe, and that was really taboo; you know you don't interfere with your spouse while they are disciplining the kids and I think Mark picked up on that and he worked--he's a sharp man--I think he worked it. . . . and finally Margaret and I agreed that if both of us were here, I would be the disciplinarian and I think it helps. We haven't had to worry much about it lately.

The similarity of Family Two's standards illustrates just how close a family's standards may be. Virginia Shepherd and Tom Walters seem to have the same attitudes toward life, and the same standards.

Tom relates that,

We are both very similar in our patterns. . . . That similarity between us, I think, has been a real plus. The fact that we work together, think alike from a scientific method point of view. Things just flow because of that. We anticipate certain things. The organization is very similar, and that has helped us a lot over the years.

Virginia agrees about their similarities. She reports,

I think Tom and I have those similar priorities which I
guess is important, too, for us getting along. We think the same things are important in our lives and we try to follow that. It's easy to understand when the other one wants to do something because we know why they wanted to do it.

I found that spouses' differing standards lead to negotiations. The outcome of the Jefferson's negotiation, for example, was consensus that Greg's standard was adopted for the child care task. Other outcomes might have been that Margaret's standard be adopted or that the spouses continue to argue over who is right. The next category of findings reports more on task negotiations.

**Negotiation of Task Performance and Responsibility**

The eight dual-career families examined in this study used 17 strategies for negotiating household and child care tasks. Some of the strategies that emerged from the interviews and observations are similar to those listed by Falbo and Peplau (1980) and Buss, Higgins, Lauterbach and Gomes, (1987).

I will now name and explain this study's 17 strategies. Two or more families reported the first nine strategies; only one family listed the eight remaining strategies. I used the words and phrases of the families generating or adopting a specific strategy to designate
and explain that strategy.

Two or more families use the following strategies. The order of their presentation is random.

1) "If it bothers you it belongs to you." Explanation: the person who is bothered by a task being neglected or who considers it important that a task be done is the one who must do it.

2) "Wait out the other." Explanation: a spouse will wait as long as possible to see if some annoying task (such as cleaning up a dirty kitchen) bothers the partner; and the one whom it bothers the most the soonest does the task.

3) "Talk it out." Explanation: if doing a task too often or disliking a task bothers one spouse, he/she will broach the subject to the other spouse and the spouses will talk until they find a mutually acceptable solution, such as paying the bills together rather than one person paying them.

4) "Nag." Explanation: one spouse will keep asking the other spouse to do a task, and ask again and again if the other spouse has done the task.

5) "Promote one's own viewpoint." Explanation: if some task
needs to be done, each spouse may argue for performing the task a
certain way or argue for not performing the task at all, and each will
support her/his point of view in the discussion with evidence.

6) "Cooperatively working it out." Explanation: Discuss ways to
perform a task that are least onerous to both spouses. (Similar to
talking it out.)

7) "Ask or suggest to the other." Explanation: If one spouse has
many tasks to do she/he asks or suggests that the other help out and
perform a task.

8) "Fair play." Explanation: One spouse will appeal to the other's
sense of fairness in order to get the other to help with or perform a
task.

9) "Fight and neither does the task." Explanation: If spouses
disagree over tasks and fight about it, sometimes neither performs the
task.

The following strategies were used by one family. As before, the
order of their presentation is random.

10) "Convince the other it's his/hers." Explanation: Try to
persuade a spouse that the task is one that he/she initiated and owns
so that he/she must do the task.

11) "Look to see what the other is doing." Explanation: this is a nonverbal negotiation in which spouses look at one another to see what the other is doing; one will intuit when it's her/his turn to perform a task.

12) "Who's less tired." Explanation: The person who can convince the other he/she is more tired also convinces him/her to perform a task.

13) "Weekly task timetable." Explanation: spouses met once every week--usually on the weekend--and make up a task list for the following week and agree on who is designated to perform each task.

14) "Make the other feel guilty." Explanation: if the spouse who is supposed to perform a task does not do it, the other spouse may do the task to make the first spouse feel guilty and more likely to perform "their" task next time.

15) "Pay to have it done." Explanation: one spouse may get irritated when the other spouse fails to perform a task and pay to have the task done; or the spouses may negotiate an agreement to pay to have the task done.
16) "Lists." Explanation: one spouse may make lists of tasks and present the lists to the other spouse to perform the listed tasks.

17) "Start a project and ask for help." Explanation: one spouse may start a large project and then ask the other for help in order to involve the other spouse in the task.

Some of the strategies are cooperative; others are self-interested; and a few are manipulative. Some strategies were said to backfire. The "Lists" and "Nag" strategies did produce a reaction opposite to that intended: the spouse given the list or the nagged spouse would often refuse to perform tasks. Some strategies may be coupled with others. "Talk it out" may lead to "Promote one's own viewpoint" and/or "Cooperatively work it out."

One family has extensively renegotiated tasks in the past year. Family Four, Clair Scott and Fred Black, have found the process to be somewhat difficult. The arena of task negotiation and allocation is where a lot of issues get worked out in this family. Fred spoke on this matter:

When it comes to even jobs that both of us regard as relatively minor, you know, if you say something to the other person about the bathrooms in a certain way, that can
communicate all sorts of things about your life together.

He adds further:

I think [what] that says in part is that issues regarding daily tasks around the house, if neither person is primarily the domestic in the house, those issues still can be the ones where a lot of other areas of personal relationships can get either argued out or worked out or something so that you aren't dealing with totally neutral ideas. We are not.

One issue still being worked out in this family regarded which of the spouses' needs were primary. Prior to renegotiating tasks, the couple fell into a pattern when time was short, of the wife "doing significantly more" tasks than her husband. She commented: "I get upset with that partly because that's my time [to work], but more it's how I'm being perceived by him." Because time often is short in this family and Clair was busy with her career, she resented not being accorded equal consideration for her needs. Fred, on the other hand, when under some kind of career pressure in the past, felt that his wife would assume household and child care tasks.

The history of the two careers in the Scott/Black family and their effect on task negotiation has influenced more recent negotiations. When first married, Clair was not sure what direction her career would take. It was important for the family that Fred succeed in his
career. Later, when Clair’s career “took off” and became as significant as Fred’s, he saw “the home front...in a different way...more symmetry, I guess...”

Thus, due to Clair’s career ascending in importance in the outside world and consequently in the family, it became possible for both spouses to regard housework and child care as justifiably divisible in half, and they set about intentionally dividing the work as fairly as possible and in the process began to change the old standards to which they had been socialized.

Because Clair tends to be aware of the household and child care tasks that need doing, she will often make up a list and the spouses will divide up the chores. Fred comments on this:

When we don’t say “you’re responsible for this area”...or “this is the timetable”, it always seems like it could be done some other time. I’m not quite sure what my responsibility is anyway....I end up thinking “Well, I’ve just got to finish such and such a project.” And I never get around to [tasks] ....If we don’t have assignments, particularly if I don’t have an assignment, Clair ends up acting first on the task, household tasks.

The couple handle the household and child care tasks and responsibilities with greater ease. Establishing a timetable, has
helped both Clair and Fred do the tasks assigned to them in their mutually worked out agreement.

All of the negotiation strategies listed here may be used at some time in negotiation of tasks. Negotiation of household tasks and responsibilities is a part of a family's working together to accomplish the goals of creating and maintaining a comfortable home and raising children.

**Employment Flexibility**

Flexibility of employment refers to whether or not a person may leave work to care for a child, to take care of family business, or whether a person can arrange work hours to adjust to family needs. As I noted in the Methodology chapter, the spouses in half of the eight families are matched in employment flexibility; half are unmatched. A spouse's flexibility of employment may affect his/her availability for task sharing.

The Miller family, Family Seven, illustrates the unmatched condition. Hannah is flexibly employed and Kevin is inflexibly employed. Hannah can get away from work to attend to family business or a sick child—most of the time. But, she relates,
"...when I'm really busy, I'm not flexible; it just depends on the work load." Kevin's job is less flexible, but when Hannah is not free he takes time off from work. He says of his job,

It's pretty inflexible. I really need to be there at eight and I really am expected to stay there until at least 4:30. And even to the point that it's the first place I've worked like this and there's a lot of advantages to the place but I think they are pretty pissed about this. Even if you have to go to a funeral, for example, if I had to go to a funeral, I would be expected to make up that time.

So, Kevin can take time off from work if absolutely necessary, but must make it up. He rarely does this unless Hannah cannot take off, or there is some important family event he needs to attend. His lack of flexibility to take off to care for a sick child or attend to family business leaves Hannah to perform many child care tasks and some household tasks which they might share if it were not for the differences in the spouses' job flexibility.

Hannah views the flexibility of her work as a "trap." She relates,

...well, either you start expecting yourself [to do tasks] or the rest of the family considers you're the one that's available, and therefore I think in one's own mind as well as everybody else's in the family...that translates into "you have more time" or "your work's not as important."

She sees the more flexibly-employed person as sliding into task
performance and responsibility without thinking to refuse or to renegotiate tasks and responsibilities. She adds this thought: "...and then you get to be the only one that ever thinks of it too."

James Wade and Janet Sinclair, Family Five, are another family that is unmatched in employment flexibility. James is not only more available for tasks and responsibilities on evenings and weekends than Janet is, but his job is considerably more flexible than Janet's in allowing time off for family business. He reports, "I'm more flexible; since I'm the director down there, I can get away."

Janet describes the situation in regard to the differences in the spouses' flexibility:

You see...James gets stuck with more of the car stuff and like the child care stuff because his being the boss he can come and go as he pleases and I mean they like count minutes at the agency where I work...so every time I'm gone for 15 minutes or more I have to take some kind of leave. So the job is very inflexible.

This combination of James' availability for tasks during work time and non-work hours is in strong contrast to his wife's unavailability. He then assumes more care for their child if he is ill and runs more family errands during work.
Both Hannah Miller and James Wade exemplify what happens when spouses are unmatched in employment flexibility. Both families rely on the flexible spouse for care of sick children and to take care of necessary family business during work hours.

Family Two, Virginia Shepherd and Tom Walters--whose jobs are matched in flexibility--stand in contrast to the flexibly unmatched spouses. There are few hours in the week when one of the spouses cannot get away to pick up a sick child. Virginia speaks on this:

"Usually it works out that we don't have class at the same time. Occasionally we have a semester in which a lab [that Tom] teaches might overlap a lab I teach and there would be one hour of the week in which neither one of us could get away."

Tom adds to that:

"We don't consciously try to have it that way. Although there are some conscious efforts, like at least one of us not having an early class. Both of us having an early class [means] we can't get the kids you know, Jeff to school... So that we try to do, but the rest of it we don't. So that's one thing we do a lot. Course we both are in Chemistry, and we can fill in for each other on jobs too. See, what will happen is not only do we help each other out at home, but our offices are right across from each other in the same department, so we not only play together, we work together. And so what happens is that when we're at school if one of us has to take off with a kid, the other could fill in on a class, and have the background to do it, so it's not like a big problem. It's a pretty unique situation."
Unique it is, and it provides flexibility for sharing the care of a sick child or for taking care of family business.

The Jeffersons, Family Three, are also matched in employment flexibility. Unlike Family Two they are not flexibly employed so that task sharing is somewhat different.

Greg is often the one who stays home with one of the children if he/she is sick. He can make up work by staying late or going in on the weekend if he needs to do so. Margaret can take off work also and make it up another time. She usually does this for the children's medical appointments. The main hardship their employment flexibility imposes on the spouses is that Greg has to work on the weekend at times—which he does not like—to make up for taking off to care for a sick child and Margaret already does work such long hours that making up time extends her already long work day.

The four families whose degrees of employment flexibility have just been described tell the story for all eight families. The four families whose spouses are unmatched in employment flexibility (Families One, Five, Six and Seven) report that the spouse who is flexibly employed has by default more care of sick children and takes
care of more family business; and a spouse often performs more tasks after work such as supper preparation if one spouse has longer work hours than the other. The families matched on employment flexibility (Families Two, Three, Four and Eight) report more equal sharing of caring for sick children; taking care of family business; and sharing of after work household tasks.

I have discussed sharing of tasks and employment flexibility at length. Now I present the influences that spouses have experienced in regard to task sharing.

**Influences on Task Sharing**

One or both spouses in several families report that they were influenced by similar kinds of individual life events or broader impersonal social changes. Other influences on spousal sharing appear to be unique and personal.

Several of the husbands, for instance, report they were influenced by the feminist movement as were some of the wives: Kevin Miller, Susan Anderson and husband Rob Davis, Virginia Shepherd and her husband Tom Walters. Kevin recounts how feminism influenced his task-sharing:
You know, probably where it happened was my junior and senior year at college. I lived with a group of people, there were probably 10 or 12, and half of them were just raging feminists at the time, this was in the mid-to-late sixties, so my consciousness was raised many levels and that was a sharing situation. Half men and half women, we were expected to share, share all the responsibilities and tasks...and we took turns cooking and shopping and these women, they were all different, but they were all women that I thought a lot of and they varied from real outspoken feminists to more mild-mannered and yet still very strong...So that, I would say, that had quite an influence and...I think for some reason...I tended to associate with people who felt that was the right thing to do in the late 60's. Most of my friends were those type of people who felt that men should share responsibilities with women...I do strongly feel that women shouldn't be saddled with the drudgery of housework all their lives.

Husbands reported another influence frequently and that was the experience of growing up and watching their mothers do all the domestic work with no assistance from their fathers. Rob Davis, Tom Walters, Greg Jefferson, Fred Black, Dave Sanderson and Jim Moore all believe that observation of their families-of-origin led them to realize that women should not have to do all the family work. The dawning of feminism probably had some background influence as in Rob's description, which tells a typical account:

...in my case I saw my Mother, just constantly cooking and washing and...cleaning and doing all that stuff and
the only things my father did were the car and the yard and the exterior and the hardware and problems, troubleshooting kinds of stuff and he didn't do anything domestic....So I guess I was becoming aware of women, feminism became popular and women were changing and they expected more of men and I just felt like to be an acceptable guy I was just going to have to give in to that and it made sense that they shouldn't be the ones constantly washing all the dishes or whatever.

The wife's career was an influence on task-sharing that was cited by four spouses: either the mere existence of another career in the family or the fact that a career was at the stage of "take off". An example of the first influence was Rob Anderson saying: "I really couldn't expect her to do everything by herself and have a job."

Margaret Jefferson expected Greg to share when they were married because she too was a full-time careerist. She said,

Yeah, I figured that out the first day I went to work. I always thought you'd go to work and come home and you had this long evening and you could do all these other things and I'd come home and it was 5:30 and I'd cook supper and eat and clean the dishes and it was like 8 o'clock and I realized then that you just couldn't get it all done, even when I was by myself and just had to pick up after myself. I mean we got married and moved in together, and he had already been doing [tasks] and I just expected him to continue.

Clair Scott and Fred Black both speak of the influence of Clair's career "take off" on their task allocation
Fred begins:

...the other thing is that Clair’s career...began to take off and to do well...so that there was a greater sense of importance in both halves—in external work which meant (this is my interpretation) that the homefront, from my point of view was seen in a different way...it was more a symmetry, I guess. As long as it was anything like the older assymetry of the family life in which I was raised, then it seemed just at gut level as though, when it comes right down to it, more her stuff.

Fred's wife Clair believes that her full-time career and national recognition of her photography have benefitted her both individually and in her marriage. She says, "I think I have a greater sense of self-respect. . . . I think I can be more of a partner with Fred."

Clair's status in a job that is as important as Fred's has helped the Scott/Black spouses to overcome much of the traditional socialization that created marital problems with task allocation.

Two of the spouses report that helping out with tasks while growing up at home was a precursor to their marital sharing of tasks. James Wade said, "The household I grew up in, everyone had their assigned tasks" and so he just expects to "get things done if it has to be done."

The other spouse who grew up sharing in task performance is
Melanie Sanderson. She describes this:

The way our tasks were divided when I was growing up I mean, was pretty much, when my mom remarried, my dad would run the [vacuum] cleaner and Mom would work in this room and I'd work in this room so it really was everybody working together. So I'm sure that a lot of it....It probably would have been very shocking to me, I don't know if I could have married somebody who wouldn't do [tasks]. I don't remember us talking about it when we were dating but--on our first date he cooked supper, so I mean, that probably was a clue to me that he wouldn't be helpless.

Examples of task-sharing influences I have presented so far were mentioned by several of the individuals studied. Now, the following paragraphs detail those unique or special events and circumstances that influenced spouses to share household and child care tasks with their mates.

Tom Walters recounts the events and its aftermath that influenced him to share household and child care tasks:

Probably the most important thing was losing my father. And being thrust into a situation where I had a lot of emotions and [saw] a lot of people. I became a person because of that experience. Everyone seemed to come to me with their own problems. I was growing up. I was 14 or 15. It was a pretty formative time and then on up until I was 17 or 18 it seemed like every friend I had would come to me when they had problems to help work them out. Looking at people's feeling, I was seeing things and being very
sensitive to what people did and people taking advantage of other people and I just saw a lot of relationships. . . .

This sensitizing experience resulted in Tom’s willingness to share household tasks and responsibilities with his wife Virginia.

Janet Sinclair tells of another kind of sensitizing experience that left her certain that the only kind of marriage she could have would be a sharing one. She tells this story:

When I was 18 my sister, for my graduation from high school, took me to see the Broadway play Hair, and there was this big black woman singing this song and it was about black people and white people. At the very end of the song the huge woman stood there on this stage and said, “Shit, I ain’t dyin’ for no man,” and I decided I wasn’t dying for any . . . man, especially after the first relationship [ended in divorce]. If they don’t want to share it with me, I don’t want to share it with them and so to me it was a non-negotiable point that if I was going to spend my life with somebody, they were going to do the same things I was going to do—share the tasks and share the joy and share everything equally.

Influences on task-sharing, in summary, turned out to consist of both common patterns and unique personal experiences. Many of the cited reasons occurred before the spouses married or are a product of the wives’ having full-time careers.

The importance of these full-time careers for husbands as well as wives will now be discussed.
Career Commitment

All but two of the informants in this study are strongly committed to their careers. Susan Anderson remarks,

I never thought I'd even think about not working. People say that if you have more than one kid you can't ever do it. I'll just wait and see, but I don't think I'd ever give it up because I'd never get into administration again.

In addition, Susan has strong feelings about independence. She states that she has this "thing about being able to provide for myself. I wanted to be able to pull my own weight kinda thing." The wives, with one exception, all express their career commitment and expectation of continuing to work for many years to come; Julie Moore is thinking of quitting work in a few years.

All the men except Greg Jefferson are fully committed to their work. Jim Moore sees himself as a "borderline workaholic" who is "extremely involved" in his job. He is interested in long-term career goals.

Another person committed to being a career success is Tom Walters. He has other priorities, however, that he and his wife consider more important. He states:
Job is not top priority....So usually what it is priority-wise, we talk about this--I'm not sure we do it--but we like to put ourselves at the top, but most of the time we don't. But the fact [is] that [we're] happy, we think of each other and make sure we have time and can do things for each other; and then the children; and then the job.

An informant who has a strong commitment to her career, but who has other priorities in addition to work is Clair Scott. She wants to produce the "very best work" she can, but, she says "I don't want to do that at the cost of screwing up Katy's life by not being present for her or destroying my marriage." This would result in Clair's feeling a failure and would make her art work "less significant" to her. But she would not have married anyone who would not like her to have a career.

Julie Moore, of Family Six, is one of the two spouses whose career commitment is is only moderate. She states:

I think eventually I'm going to stay home [from work] and do something more creative, I don't know. I guess I'm not real career-oriented.

Greg Jefferson of Family Three, is also considering staying home. Caring for his children seems as important to him as his career. Due to the strain of the long hours of their two careers, Greg had considered quitting his job so that he could stay at home and care for the children and have some time with his wife. He speaks of this
Yeah, we'd made the decision and all that. I'd talked to my employer, told him I was probably going to quit unless I could work something else out, and I was going to take care of the [the children] and then [Margaret and I] got to talking it out and decided "Well, maybe it was worth trying to get somebody [for the children]." We were talking about goals the other night... professional goals like "I'm going to be the greatest"... I don't really have those kinds of ambitions. I just felt like well, I'll just take care of the kids for at least two years and it wouldn't really have bothered me. I feel like I could get back into my profession pretty easily without losing too much. I don't know about Margaret; her field changes a little more rapidly... Salary-wise she makes right much more money than I do and that's why if anybody's going to quit it's probably going to be me because we couldn't live in this lifestyle on my salary. I guess mostly I work, I enjoy working [but] it's just a job.

Since Greg's income is lower than his wife's and he is less committed to his career than she, it seemed reasonable to the spouses that he be the one to stay home. But just as he was at the point of resigning from his job, the Jeffertons decided to hire a sitter/housekeeper full time. Although Greg did not quit his job this time, the option remains should the sitter not work out.

In summary, 14 of the 16 spouses are very committed to their careers; two are not as career-oriented as the remainder of the husbands and wives in the study. These two are questioning whether
they might be better occupied spending a few years caring for their young children.

**Art Analysis**

Seven of the families drew pictures that illustrated the family in recreational settings; that is, in these seven families there were no drawings that recorded tasks being performed.

Family Four, drew pictures depicting task performance. In two of the three pictures drawn by his wife, Fred is attending to/playing with their daughter; in the third one he is shown preparing her breakfast. Fred drew himself fishing while Clair attended to their daughter; he depicts himself enjoying private leisure while this wife attends to/plays with the child.

Many spouses drew pictures of the same type. Families One, Two, Seven and Eight drew recreational scenes—for example, the family at the beach. Families Three, Five and Six drew entirely different kinds of scenes. It is interesting to note that the two people who had considered quitting work to stay at home and care for their children were the only two out of the 16 spouses studied who drew pictures of the family at home; pictures drawn by all other spouses were in
settings away from home. This indicates that for these two people
their home and family are of primary focus.

Conclusions About the Findings

Virtually all this study's findings about each family or spouse are
based on multiple data sources. The only exceptions to this (and it is
noted in the text) is that some of the task negotiation strategies
were mentioned by only one partner. In every other case, no finding
about a single family is based on only one mention or observations of a
subject; each finding reported here is based on at least two, and
usually three, mentions/observations of a subject in several
interviews or observations. I used the informant's own words,
wherever possible, to present the data of the findings, enhancing the
study's validity.
Chapter 5

Summary and Assertions

The several findings of this study extend over many pages and are interspersed with much family data. I will therefore summarize the findings.

Summary

Three categories of spousal participation in household and child care task performance and responsibility emerged from the data of the eight families who took part in this study: the "sharers" (n = 2), the "strivers" (n = 5), and "worker/helpers" (n = 1). Among the sharers, the spouses divided the total family work load almost equally; among the strivers, wives assumed slightly more than half of the total family work load; and in the worker/helper family the wife did considerably more than half the total family work, with which the husband helped. Figure 4 indicates which families fit each category.

The tasks most often performed by husbands—in addition to the stereotypical male tasks of yardwork, car maintenance and house repair—were child care tasks. Other tasks men performed frequently were cleaning the house and washing dishes. Figure 6 provides further
information on these tasks\ distributions.

None of the eight wives performed all family tasks and responsibilities except for those traditionally performed by men--yard, car and house maintenance. The spouses in seven families, shared task performance virtually equally while wives assumed more task responsibilities--with the exception of Family Two's Tom Walters. Figure 7 provides information on this and other findings of this study.

Some spouses reported that intentionality about tasks influences task sharing. Planning task performance and responsibility at once-a-week planning sessions can avoid a common pitfall of task-sharing; that is, placing the wife in a position of assuming tasks and responsibilities by default if her husband doesn't do them.

A spouse's comparative energy level can affect task performance and responsibility. The spouse with the higher energy level will tend to assume a larger share of the total family work load.

Some of the busy dual-career families find paid help can be of valuable assistance. The help may be a once a week housecleaning or a
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<td>N N Y Y N N Y Y N N N N N N N N</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Employ paid help</td>
<td>N N N N N N Y Y N N N N N N Y Y Y Y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spouse with high energy level</td>
<td>N Y N N N N N N N Y N N N N N N</td>
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<tr>
<td>High career commitment</td>
<td>Y Y Y Y N Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexible employment</td>
<td>N Y Y Y N N Y Y Y Y N N Y N Y Y Y Y</td>
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Key: N=No; Y=Yes

Figure 7. Spouses' self-report on seven study issues
full time sitter/housekeeper. Retaining paid help may reduce the work overload for spouses, allowing them more time for being with their children or doing other activities, but task sharing remains to be negotiated, even among families with paid help.

Standards were strikingly similar between spouses. In all families there were minor variations in standards, the most common being that one spouse would attend more often to household clutter and the other to dirt. The two sharer couples' standards were the most alike. Differences in task standards between spouses leads to negotiation of the task: whether to do it and/or how to do it.

These task negotiations usually involve use of behavioral strategies on the part of one or both spouses. Seventeen negotiation strategies emerged from this study: nine were listed by two or more informants; eight were listed by one informant only. The strategies fall into three categories: (a) cooperative, (b) self-interested, and (c) manipulative. Tasks are negotiated when one spouse does not like the current pattern. Figure 8 lists the primary type(s) of task negotiation used by each family.

Task performance and responsibility may be renegotiated by
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Strategy</th>
<th>Family 1 (Striver)</th>
<th>Family 2 (Sharer)</th>
<th>Family 3 (Striver)</th>
<th>Family 4 (Striver)</th>
<th>Family 5 (Striver)</th>
<th>Family 6 (Worker/helper)</th>
<th>Family 7 (Striver)</th>
<th>Family 8 (Sharer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C/S</td>
<td>C/S</td>
<td>C/S</td>
<td>S/M</td>
<td>C/S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C/S</td>
<td>C/S</td>
<td>C/S</td>
<td>S/M</td>
<td>S/M</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: C = use cooperative negotiation strategies  
S = use self-interested negotiation strategies  
M = use manipulative negotiation strategies

Figure 8. Spouses use of types of negotiation strategies
spouses. This may lead to a conclusion that equalizes task sharing and
gives more tasks and responsibilities to the husband—if the husband
perceives the wife’s career is as significant as his own.

Flexibility of employment influences task sharing. The more
flexibly-employed person will be called on to get and take care of a
sick child and also will tend to do more family business errands. If, in
addition, one spouse has long work hours as well as inflexible
employment while the other spouse has normal work hours and
somewhat flexible employment, the second spouse will perform many
more child care and household tasks. This situation may then be
perceived by the flexible person as inferring her/his work is not as
important as the other person’s work.

Spouses report influences on task sharing that are similar across
several families. The most common influences on task sharing were
(a) the feminist movement (at least half the husbands and wives
mentioned this), (b) perceptions of fairness (some husbands recalled
seeing their mothers do all the domestic work which seemed in
retrospect unfair to them), (c) multiple role overload (wives’ having
two careers in the family which influenced both husbands and wives to
see the need to divide family work more equitably), and (e) early experiences in sharing tasks (growing up sharing tasks at home). Other influences are unique and personal to the spouse experiencing them.

Fourteen out of the 16 dual-career spouses were strongly committed to careers. The two who were not so committed—a husband in one family and a wife in another—are considering quitting work to care for their children. Other spouses, while committed to careers, were not willing to risk “screwing up” their families for their careers.

The family art work generated in this study contains only one family’s pictures showing any tasks being performed. Five sets of spouses drew the same type of picture, for instance, beach scenes. Two families drew quite different kinds of pictures: in these two families the two spouses who are considering quitting work to stay at home and care for children drew pictures with home settings, which suggests that home may be more of an immediate concern to them than to the other 14 spouses.

All reported findings, except for eight of the negotiation
strategies, were based on at least three interviews and observations. I documented the findings in the informant's own words which adds to the validity of the study.

**Assertions**

Sharer and striver husbands all performed at least half the household and child care tasks. If this study had looked at task performance as the only form of task participation, then the husbands and wives in these seven families would have been characterized as sharers. But, this study took into account task responsibility in addition to task performance (as comprising the total family work load) and this means that five husbands' nonparticipation in part of the household and child care task responsibilities placed them in the striver category.

Task responsibility is an important component of the family work load. The role of the family executive (a role shared equally in Family Two, a wife's role in all other families) is a time-consuming and important role in family life: that role includes initiation, planning, organizing and reviewing of tasks. This household executive function is often neglected when tasks are being negotiated. Wives and
husbands need to begin to recognize it as an integral part of the total family work load, and either begin to share it more equally, or make adjustments in family task performance to better balance the family work load. Dual-career wives, in this study, remain the household executives.

The task-sharing husbands participated most often in child care tasks and next in the household tasks of cleaning and washing dishes, supporting Bird, Bird and Scruggs' (1984) finding that child care and cleaning tasks are among the most shared in dual-career families. This study also supports Gilbert's (1985) finding that men share child care more than household tasks.

Task-sharing spouses who are unmatched in employment flexibility share household and child care tasks and task responsibilities less equally than the spouses who are matched in employment flexibility. The exceptions occurred only when a special effort was made by spouses to equalize the family work load. Families in which both spouses are flexibly employed had an easier time managing and sharing household and child care tasks.

The two sharer couples, Family Two and Family Eight, used all of
the cooperative task negotiation strategies listed in the section on task negotiations in Chapter Two, and one of the self-interested strategies: "promote one's own viewpoint". These two couples used far more cooperative strategies overall, than the other six couples and none of the manipulative strategies. This makes the sharers not only more cooperative on task and task responsibility sharing, but more cooperative in other aspects of family life. The conclusion this engenders is that shared task negotiation does not require confrontation or manipulation to be effective.

Scanzoni (1979) cited that the reason tasks are negotiated is to change the way tasks are done. My study introduced a second reason: tasks are negotiated when something needs to be done (phone is ringing, child is crying) which could be done by either spouse and either spouse is willing to do it. Negotiation is simply the process by which the spouses decide who does the task. The process may be either verbal or nonverbal.

The high level of sharing in all the eight families leads to several hypotheses for further investigation: where wives in dual-career families contribute 40% or more of the family's earned income,
husbands are likely to perform 40% or more of the total family work load. Spouses in such families, who view both the wife's and husband's careers as comparable in terms of economic rewards and personal and societal recognition, may be more willing to share the family work load so that both spouses can pursue vigorous careers. If wives make a significant contribution to family income, husbands are likely to make a contribution to the family work load that is proportional to the wives' contribution to the family income.

Another hypothesis is: couples who evidence equal sharing of the family work load use more cooperative task negotiation strategies overall than couples with less than equal sharing of family work loads. Figure 7 makes this evident for the eight families in this study.

Couples who share the work load equally may have worked out strategies that facilitate sharing.

Another hypothesis is that husbands in dual-career families share task performance at a higher rate than they share task responsibility. Task responsibility may be less recognized as family work.

The final hypothesis is that if a spouse in a dual-career marriage has more flexible work hours than the other spouse, the flexible
spouse will do more child care and household tasks than the spouse whose employment is less flexible.

These findings and conclusions need further testing before we may confidently generalize to dual-career families in other settings. These studies might be both qualitative and quantitative, or a combination of the two.

The ethnographic methods employed in this study are appropriate for the study of family types other than the dual-career family. Repeated interviews and observations allow for the emergence of data about families that could lead to a greater understanding of family process—both in natural settings or in the context of therapy—and to refinements in quantitative research design. Computer software is now available for processing the large amounts of data generated in such studies making them much more manageable, less time consuming and lowering their cost.

Qualitative studies, such as this ethnographic one, produce a richness of data and a finer-grained texture than is available from conventional quantitative studies. The participants’ own words deepen our understanding of family process. Qualitative studies produce not
only information that is sought as in the research questions of this study, but allow for data to emerge that is not expected, thereby enriching the study and deepening our insights.
Chapter 6

Implications of the Study

This study has implications for research on and counseling of dual-career and dual-earner spouses. These implications are now described.

Implications for Research.

This study will need to be followed by other studies to establish whether the findings are confirmed. For example, this qualitative study has suggested that wives' contribution to family income may be a very important factor in establishing the extent of husband's participation in family work. Additional studies are needed to establish the specific relation between wives' contribution to family income and fraction of family work load taken by dual-career husbands.

This study's findings also suggest future research on dual-career families is needed to establish: the relation between spouses' division of the total family work load and types of negotiation strategies used; the relation between spouses' attitudes of fairness about assumption of the family work load and their division of family work; the relation
between spouses' intentionality of task sharing and the amount of the family work load assumed by spouses; the relation between flexibility of employment and spouses' assumption of family tasks and responsibilities; and whether dual-career husbands are increasing their assumption of task performance at a higher rate than they are increasing their assumption of task responsibility;

Researchers might also benefit from studies specifically comparing family sharing in the two categories suggested in the findings of this study: the egalitarian sharers who share all tasks and responsibilities without regard to gender roles (type A); and the quasi-traditional sharers who while sharing the total work load remain with traditional male and female work categories much of the time, and share across gender lines some of the time (type B). Some researchers (for example, St. John-Parsons, 1978 and Garland, 1971) have sought only Type A behaviors. I propose looking for both Type A and Type B behaviors in order to understand and appreciate the amount of household and child care tasks and task responsibilities being performed/assumed by men in dual-career families, and in dual earner families as well.
Seeking both Type A and Type B sharers offers researchers at least two advantages: (a) future studies may find more sharing of the total family work load comprised of household and child care tasks and responsibilities in dual-career families if the categories of sharing types are expanded from one to two; and (b) the quest for seeking task sharing in families would be more realistic and less idealistic if the categories reported in this report are adopted. Researchers could then look for what actually occurs in families rather than only one type of behavior valued for embodying ideological and behavioral ideals. Research using the two sharing types rather than Type A only would be more solidly grounded.

Implications for counseling.

There are several ways counselors might use some concepts from this research in counseling couples. First, a check list of family tasks and responsibilities based on Figure 6 could be used in marital therapy where task allocation is an issue. This could aid counselor and spouses to better understand what task and responsibility sharing consists of in a particular family. The list of tasks would serve, in therapy, as a basis for discussing attitudes toward and problems with
Another concept that counselors may find useful is "intentionality" in task sharing. Couples who desire to share more tasks and responsibilities and who are having difficulty in implementing sharing might find weekly task/responsibility planning sessions beneficial.

Both counselors and researchers might keep in mind the finding of this study about energy level of spouses and how this may effect task sharing. Counselors of spouses may need to come to some understanding of the differences in task participation attributable to differences in energy levels. Spouses could negotiate tasks with an understanding that one spouse may need to slow down and let the other catch up; or the energetic one could switch some time spent on tasks to leisure activities in order to even up the task load between spouses.

In summary, this study yielded outcomes of interest to and possible use by two groups: professional counselors of dual-career families as well as dual-earner families, and the community of researchers in family studies. To the counselors, this research offers some findings that may be useful in professional practice. To the
researchers, this study's findings have implications for future research about dual-career and dual-earner families.
Footnotes

Chapter Three

1. Issues identified briefly here are more fully explored or developed in Ventre, Eisenhart & Bird, Joining the family circle: A qualitative study of dual-career families. Manuscript submitted for publication.
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Appendix A.

Informed Consent Form

I consent to participate in the study of dual-career families being conducted by Mary T. Ventre with the assistance of __________________________ I understand that I will be asked questions about my dual-career family experiences. I understand that my responses will be compared to those of other dual-career families for the purpose of discovering patterns in the ways individuals within dual-career families make decisions and deal with stress. I understand that my responses, along with those of others, may be used in presentation, articles and reports prepared under the direction of Mary T. Ventre. Further, I understand that: (1) my responses will be kept completely confidential; (2) I may ask questions regarding the study at any time; (3) I may obtain copies of all presentations, articles and reports on the study; and (4) I may choose to leave the study at any time.

_________________________  __________________________
Print Name                                Date

_________________________  __________________________
Signature                        Researcher's Signature
Appendix B.

First Participant Observation Guidelines

Purpose: a) describe family tasks, as observed,
       b) have supper with the family and describe how this family handles responsibility for all the tasks associated with a meal,
       c) describe how this family performs all the tasks associated with a meal,
       d) describe how parents in this family take responsibility for child care tasks that are observed,
       e) describe how the parents in this family perform child care tasks that are observed.

Second Participant Observation Guidelines

Purpose: a) further describe family tasks, as observed,
       b) have the family participate in the kinetic family drawing, and describe how this task is handled by the spouses,
       c) describe how parents in this family take responsibility for household and childcare tasks that are observed,
       d) describe how the parents in this family perform household and childcare tasks that are observed.
Appendix C.

Questions for Interviews 2 and 3

1. What are the family tasks and who generally does them? Please run through them.
2. How did you divide tasks early in your marriage?
3. What kinds of tasks do you initiate (consider important to be done and see that they are done)?
4. Which ones does your spouse consider important and take responsibility for?
5. In what areas of tasks do you and your spouse have different standards?
6. How do you negotiate tasks? What is the process when either of you thinks a task needs to be done which the other does not want to do, or does not consider important? (Elicit as much data as possible on what negotiate and how this spouse interacts with mate over task.)
7. If tasks that you consider important do not get done, what happens?
8. If tasks your spouse considers important do not get done, what happens?
9. Which tasks are most difficult?
10. What are strains resulting from tasks? (Strains are problems for either spouse with any area of task process.)
Appendix D. Eight Family Stories

Family Story, Family 1

Introduction to the Family

The Anderson/Davis house is located among the Allegheny mountains at the end of a long spectacular ride into the country. It is set among trees at the end of a winding gravel drive. There are no houses in sight, although there are one or two not very far away. The nearest store is six miles away.

The house is a country cottage with a large front porch, and has three bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and enclosed back porch. It is full of plants and natural objects. A dog pen is at the side of the house for the couple's show dogs. Flowers and vegetables grow in the back yard in a sunny location. A brook runs at the edge of the property.

Susan Anderson is an elementary school vice-principal in a nearby city. She has approximately a half-hour commute to work. She also teaches night classes in adult education several times a year and shows their beautiful dogs a weekend or two a month. She is a very
energetic and vivacious woman. Rob Davis is employed at an engineering firm also in the nearby city, and has about the same commuting time to work. He is thoughtful and rather quiet in contrast to Susan. His interests are in hiking, wild animals and mycology. Will, their son who is four, attends pre-school and daycare in a nearby town.

This family runs on a tight schedule, fitting in the husband's job, the wife's two jobs and the child's pre-school and daycare. When they come home for the evening they stay in--except when the wife goes out to teach adult education. They shop on weekends and rarely drive to the nearest store (six miles away) for things they might have forgotten. The wife's pace seems hectic, but enjoyable for her. The husband lives at a slower pace which suits his needs, and he enjoys the quiet life in the country when not at work.

Allocation of Task Performance and Responsibility

Rob saw certain chores as having become his over the years:

...the firewood and any kind of auto related things. If the car gets washed I did it, and if it's broken, I have to get it fixed. I also do the trash; I have to take it to the dumpster...I'm the one that pretty much balances
the checkbook. I used to be comptroller but I think Susan likes the checkbook now so she pays the bills right now. One more thing... I do maybe 90% of the bedtime story reading.

In addition to these tasks, Rob waters plants in the garden, takes walks with their son, tends to the wood and kerosene stoves, cleans out the refrigerator, shops for groceries and other household items, takes care of their son on weekends while Susan shows their dogs, and makes outside house repairs.

Many tasks fall primarily to Susan. She reports some of these:

I do more manual tasks... I do the major tasks, make the beds, wash the clothes, maintenance--I'm the maintenance department... changing the linens, switching [Will's] bed every day... I'll wash, dry, put away the clothes... I do yard work, again, 80% of the time. I do dog maintenance 90% of the time... 90% of the time I mop the floors.

Other tasks which Susan does are the gardening, keeping up with friends and her family, arranging for sitters, ironing clothes, cleaning the toilet and washing dishes.

A number of tasks are shared more or less equally. Many child care tasks are shared this way. Susan relates,

Rob takes walks with him. I think Rob plays with him more than I do. Will just basically joins in on any activity that I'm doing, like if I'm cooking he can cook with
me and if I'm folding clothes he can do that. If I'm vacuuming, he can do that, but it's really like a play activity.

Rob adds to this:

...I generally take Will to one of your child care things... we have a woman in our neighborhood who keeps him on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and I take him to her house about 10 after seven... And two days a week Will goes to preschool in [the city] and Susan takes him... and then picks him up at 4:30... And then Susan returns home.

So, playing with or working with Will are shared tasks as are driving him to sitters and to preschool. Other child care tasks that are shared are dressing Will, answering his questions, comforting him, taking him to the doctor or dentist, disciplining him and bathing him. Rob recounts a child care task the couple share:

...for a while I was doing about all the baths, I was doing more bathing of Will and now it's sort of opened up and Susan's bathing him more... He used to prefer for me to give him a bath, you know. I'm not sure what Susan did differently. I goofed around, played in the bathtub a lot longer that she did. She wants to give him the bath and get it over with where I would say, "OK, you play with this three or four minutes" and maybe that's why he prefers me. But now I think she's balancing that out.

Additional household tasks that Susan and Rob share are cooking (which she does more frequently than he), heavy cleaning, sewing, mending and buying gifts.
Their task approaches are very different. Rob is deliberate: he thinks about a task before doing it; Susan jumps right in and seems to enjoy the task. Susan believes she does more tasks than Rob due to her higher energy level—she "gets it done faster".

The spouses share tasks sometimes by one spouse doing a child task and the "other might be obligated to do the non child thing," according to Susan. An example she gives is that one would put Will to bed and the other would fold laundry.

Task performance appears to be shared almost equally, with the wife doing slightly more tasks. Turning to task responsibility, however, the story is somewhat different.

Susan is the administrator and planner, according to Rob. She has a high energy level and delegates and schedules tasks. Rob commented on her planning abilities:

Yeah, any opportunity for her, she would delegate. She has no problem delegating tasks. Susan's an administrator. She has a much higher energy level than I do...she's real motivated to do a lot and she delegates tasks. She's willing to schedule and mark the calendar if we're doing this and that and she plans weeks and months ahead. She's working on next summer's vacation now already and she's a big planner.
If Susan is too busy to call and make a doctor's appointment for their son, for example, she delegates this task to her husband. Or, if preparing a meal, she can very efficiently prepare for the meal, delegate tasks to her husband to help her with the meal, and monitor and respond to their son. In addition to scheduling their son with the doctor and dentist, initiating visits with friends and planning family outings, she is the general overseer of almost all of the family activities.

Rob has one main family responsibility--to make out the family grocery list.

The spouses also share jointly the responsibility for: keeping up with family birthdays and sending cards; deciding about finances; deciding what movies to see or restaurant to go to; finding a babysitter, monitoring their son and deciding about vacations. In this aspect of the family work, responsibility for tasks, Rob participates mostly as a helper or co-decider.

Standards

The spouses appear to have quite similar standards for household
and child care. Two instances of differences were noted. One, Susan believes Rob is a little bit neater than she is. However, she has the philosophy that whoever thinks it should be done should do it.

The second way the spouses differ is in regard to an aspect of Will's care. On the days that Susan teaches adult education in the evenings, she will drive Will home from daycare and spend about 20 minutes with him at home before turning around and driving back to town for her class. Rob sees this as a hardship on Susan and discourages her doing this. She sees it as necessary in order to spend some time with her son that day and says, "I don't have to but I do, because I hate not seeing him."

**Negotiation of Task Performance and Responsibility**

Most tasks fall into a pattern at this stage of the Anderson/Davis marriage. Some tasks are negotiated and these are unusual tasks or new tasks; or tasks which do not belong to one or the other permanently; or occasionally the usual tasks which they share need to be renegotiated.

One negotiation strategy used by the spouses, according to Susan
is "to convince the other one that it's more his [task] than it is yours."

This strategy stems from her belief that if it bothers you, or if you
initiated the task, it belongs to you. An example of this is related by

Rob:

...generally the person who's the most interested or who
bought into the idea of wanting to build a house or some-
thing, it would be the one who mentioned it, it would fall
to them. Susan will say, "Well, you go ahead, you call them
up, you set it up with them...You want to build a house,
you call the architect."

Another kind of task negotiation is played out in the following
manner, according to Rob:

...if we're both trying to avoid something, it basically
boils down to who has the lowest tolerance and that one
will eventually do it. If we cannot stand the dog poop all
over the side of the yard out here, whoever reaches the
level of intolerance will be the one to pooper scoop the
yard or clean up the junk pile that accumulates in the
kitchen.

Another task negotiation process is reported by Susan, who said,

I think the bottom line is respect and the fact that if Rob
has a concern that I really try to listen to his concern and
I feel like first we just express it and if things don't get
better then it does go toward confrontation....So it starts
out with respectful dialogue like "Hey, this is a concern and
I need some help" or "I think you should be doing this." If the
other person ignores it then I'm not afraid of confrontation....
if I really feel overloaded I'd say “Darn, it's your turn, I've done all this,” and [Rob] would understand this... I think a lot of the reason it works is his sense of fair play.

When Rob wants Susan to do a task sometimes he will nag her about it or hint that she should do it. She will usually ignore the hinting, but will confront the issue of his nagging and they will work out who is to do the task.

Susan and Rob sometimes negotiate how many tasks they will do on a weekend day. Susan will propose perhaps four tasks to do, and Rob will refuse to do all four. She illustrates this negotiation:

Sometimes on Saturday we communicate and conference about what we're going to do this weekend. I'll say “I want to do this and this and this,” and Rob will say “I'm only going to do one of those things.” [She says], “Just think about this one and this one,” and then we compromise and I usually get two of the four things that I wanted to get done.

Sometimes when she does not get to do the tasks she wants to do, Susan will “sulk”. Usually, however, if something really bothers one of the spouses they will “argue/talk” it through to some accommodation.

**Employment Flexibility**

Rob's job requires that he be present at his office from 8 until 5.
He is in a new position and he would find it very hard to leave work to pick up their son if Will became ill—unless he took leave.

Susan works from 7:30 until 4 and in addition works several times a year teaching adult education classes at night. She may leave her daytime job if she has to, to go pick up her son if he becomes ill. She can get a substitute, or have her aide take over the classes that she teaches in addition to being vice principal of her school.

Since Susan works with (mostly) women and in an educational setting, she thinks this may be the reason her job is more flexible in regard to family illnesses. Rob, on the other hand, works with (mostly) men in an engineering firm and that may be the reason his job is less flexible than hers.

Influences on Task Sharing

Susan was influenced by the feminist movement. Her present lifestyle is somewhat different from her mother's and sister's lifestyles, and at times this can make her feel uncomfortable. She relates that, "My mother doesn't think I should work. That's shaky for me."
Rob was raised in a family where the mother did all the domestic work and his father took care of the car, yard and the exterior of the house. He recounts how tasks were handled in his childhood:

Maybe for instance we saw, in my case I saw my Mother just constantly cooking and washing and putting in cleaning and doing all that stuff and the only things my father did were the car and the yard and the exterior and the hardware and problem, troubleshooting kinds of stuff and he didn't do anything domestic. . . . So I guess I was becoming aware of women, feminism became popular and women were changing and they expected more of men and I just felt like to be an acceptable kind of guy I was just going to have to give in to that and it made sense that they shouldn't be the ones constantly washing all the dishes or whatever.

Rob added a further comment about Susan, "I really couldn't expect her to do everything by herself and have a job."

For Rob and Susan, the times in which they grew to adulthood were important and influenced them to change from the lifestyle in which they grew up toward more sharing of the household and child care work load.

Career Commitment

Both spouses are committed to working. Rob says of his job that he is committed "As long as mine stays around here and I don't have
to move, I am.” And he adds, “I’m committed to working.”

Susan states her reasons for being committed to her job,

I never thought I’d even think about not working. People say that if you have more than one kid you can’t ever do it. I’ll just wait and see, but I don’t think I’d ever give it up because I’d never get into administration again.

In addition to that, she has strong feelings about independence. She states that she “has this thing about being able to provide for myself. I wanted to be able to pull my own weight kinda thing.”

Art Analysis

Both Susan and Rob drew an outdoor scene, with the three members of the family standing on a green, grassy rise, with trees beside them. Rob drew the two dogs also and mountains behind the family. He drew their son with a stick in his hand. The son’s nonrepresentational drawing is not discussed.

No drawings recorded tasks being performed.

The family members drew their pictures carefully. The wife/mother encouraged their son at his work.

The spouses both drew the same kind of outdoor walking scene. This seems to express their pleasure in living in the country and being
able to take walks in the surrounding countryside.

**Summary**

Rob Davis and Susan Anderson have worked out a way to share the household and child care task load in which task performance is shared with Susan doing only a little more than Rob—perhaps due to her very high level of energy. Task responsibility, however, lies primarily with Susan, the family "administrater" and "planner."

Many tasks now fit a pattern at this stage of their marriage. Some tasks which are unusual or which do not fit their patterns are negotiated. Their negotiation strategies range from discussion (leading to reallocation) all the way to confrontation that is sometimes angry. Their sense of fair play usually allows them to work out a solution that both feel is fair.

The major difference in these two spouses is in levels of energy. Susan is bubbling over with it; Rob is quieter and much less active. This sometimes leads to problems with how many tasks will be undertaken in a given time. Susan's energy level accounts to some degree for her being the one who performs a slightly greater
percentage of tasks and for her taking on most of the task responsibility for their family.

Family Story, Family 2

Introduction to the Family

Virginia Shepherd and Tom Walters find living in the country compatible with the needs of their family. They have chosen this environment so that when they are not at their jobs as college professors, they can concentrate on their two sons, Jeff, who is seven, and Jeremy, one and one-half. The parents use their weekend time to accomplish things they need to do around the house.

The Shepherd/Walters house is approached by a two-lane gravel road, and then a winding gravel single-lane road that leads eventually to a small farmhouse. There are two out-buildings near the house, a large vegetable garden, and a pen for animals behind the house.

One enters the house by crossing a porch and then going indoors through the kitchen and dining area. On this level there is also a large living room and a bedroom and bath. There is a deck off of the
living room looking out to a beautiful view of hills. Two more bedrooms are upstairs. The spouses have added on the upstairs rooms themselves. The house is furnished comfortably and casually, and there are personal mementos and photographs around the rooms.

Both Tom and Virginia are employed at a college in a nearby town. They are in the same department, have doctoral degrees in the same field and teach similar kinds of classes. The spouses are committed to being good teachers and work hard at their jobs during the weekdays and many weeknights. Weekends, as has been noted, are for the children and family tasks.

One of the children, Jeff, is in elementary school and plays soccer. He likes to read and to play with trucks and cars. The other son, Jeremy, is at the age of exploring his environment and when awake is constantly interacting with it and his family.

Allocation of Task Performance and Responsibility

Virginia and Tom share most household and child care tasks. The couple's task interactions are so smooth and effective that they appear to the researchers to have been choreographed. When this was
pointed out to Virginia she said:

In some ways I guess it is choreographed because we make a point of trying to take turns doing things. We take turns as to who gets up in the middle of the night with Jeremy. And we do take turns doing things not only with the kids but when one of us can’t be home at the same time as the other one, we sort of take turns as to who starts dinner and that kind of stuff. We take turns as to who puts which kid to bed. It is sort of choreographed; we really try to take turns at it.

Tom agrees that their tasks may appear to be choreographed:

That’s probably not inaccurate. We complement each other in a lot of different ways. We’ve always talked and the two of us take the lead at different times. Not just in a few hours, but on the whole. There will be days when one of us will jump in and lead on the cooking and feels comfortable that day doing that. The other one will pick up on other things and it sort of shifts. It’s not something where we say, “I’m going to do this.” It’s something that sort of shifts.

Cooking a meal and simultaneously caring for the children are shared. Of this Tom states,

We just jump in and we’re both sort of in there feeding in at different times doing different things. The kids are right in the middle of things and we’re right in the middle of things, and you’re sharing, you’re doing it all together.

Child care tasks are an important consideration for Tom and Virginia. Tom relates,
Whoever happens to get dressed in the morning the quickest, whatever stage Jeremy is at as far as diaper change, then one feeds him and does that.... The night before we lay out everything that Jeff needs and get his books and stuff.... What we also do, is alternate every other night, one of us will read to Jeff, and the other will read to Jeremy. It's sort of a chance for us to have some time with them individually. It alternates. So every night we keep track. That's one thing we do keep track of.... When we're both there we try to alternate so, instead of doing it together, it gives us a little time personally with them when we can share things.

Also, the spouses share by doing together or alternating, these aspects of child care: taking the children to the doctor, taking them to and from the sitter, playing with them, disciplining the children, giving first aid to the children, attending to a child's problem, getting up in the middle of the night with Jeremy, responding to and helping their children, directing the children, listening to Jeff read to them at night and monitoring the children's safety and activities.

Tom relates the reasons for taking the children to the doctor together:

We both do that because that's something we'd both like to know, so we take them; we find time to set up appointments.... The only time we wouldn't is if one or the other couldn't get loose in our schedule but I don't think we have a system.... one of us will remember one thing and one will remember the other.
Virginia adds, "We usually do that together....So we ask all the
questions that need to be asked."

Both spouses encourage Jeff's participation in sports. Virginia
relates:

So soccer is one thing that Tom and I both try to go to. Sometimes we can't, but on Saturdays, we have...to
get up early, about 9. We both helped coach as a matter
of fact.

An indicator of the frequency and depth of sharing of child care in
this family is this: the younger child calls both parents "Daddy" when
he wants one of them; and is perfectly satisfied to have either of
them answer his call.

Many other tasks besides child care are done together. One is
clothes shopping. Tom reports,

Probably one of the reasons why we do that, going togeth-
er, too, is because it's usually a trip to the city, you know, we don't buy too much locally and so we spend more time
when we've gotta go to the city. We take the whole family
because it's going to be a more extended period and...we're
going to eat up there.

Other shared tasks are cooking, grocery list-making, grocery
shopping, running errands, laundry, cleaning the house, taking care of
the animals, ironing, buying gifts, mowing the grass, changing the oil in the cars, keeping in touch with friends, and inviting people over to their house.

While house cleaning is shared, the spouses may do different aspects of it. Tom reports,

I probably do more floor cleaning. Virginia does more bathrooms and I do more floors. . . . For some reason it's broken out that way with no intention. For some reason, when it comes to other things like the kitchen, we sort of split it, but when it comes to mopping the kitchen floor or doing a lot of the vacuuming, even though she does it sometimes, it just seems like that sort of breaks out as one of my things. And what breaks out for her is usually cleaning up the bathroom, and I don't know why that is.

Virginia usually does the sewing. Tom relates that, "...I sew but with her mother's background as a seamstress she just picks up on that."

Tom is more apt to be the one who cuts wood, does more mechanical things and clean the cars. Virginia more frequently gets spider webs out of corners.

This family does almost everything together--even combining jobs and child care. Tom describes a typical situation that combined
the spouses representing their college at an event and taking care of
the children too:

We went over and worked the West Virginia State Fair. We went over and worked the booth last Friday night and all day Saturday [for the college]. Swapped off...one of us worked for awhile taking care of the kids and the other worked the booth...So this year we get free passes so we turned it into a social family thing. They had a motel room that we'd just stay in anyway. So we just all went up Friday about noon and then got there Friday night...I worked the booth Friday night, Virginia took the kids and did some swimming in the pool and stuff like that then Saturday morning I took the kids and we went around the fair till about 1:30 so she worked all morning till about 1:30; then I worked from 1:30 till about 7:30 that evening and then we got in the car and drove home.... Got home about 1:30. But it was nice. Gave us a chance for Jeff to do things with the family.

Keeping in touch with their parents is also a priority for Virginia and Tom. Tom states,

Our families really appreciate that we spend at least two weeks at Christmas time at home, where the kids get to see their grandparents and aunts, uncles and families together. Being this far from home, that two weeks has made that a real special thing. Well, we spend two weeks during the summer too. They have two times when we have an extended period [there], because we have always tried to get home twice a year. Because we want our kids to be around their grandparents.

Turning now to the spouses' responsibility for the household and
child care tasks, the story is much the same as for task performance. Tom and Virginia both monitor the children equally and respond to their needs equally, and with consideration of the other. Virginia reports of Tom that, "He is as much aware of anything that goes on in that house and [with] the kids as I am." She goes on to say, "And when one of us feels bad, the other one always takes over more of the responsibility."

Virginia may be more of the family planner and initiator of social events. Tom says,

She makes lists and she figures out ways of doing things. That's sort of a take off of a lot of our lab work, where we've had to organize lab situations and design experiments...she is more of a leader as far as getting us to do things, which I enjoy the heck out of when I get into it. But, I'm not an initiator.

But, Tom may be more of an initiator of family home projects. Virginia recounts,

[Tom] initiates them more than I do. We usually do those, work on them together, but [he] usually starts. Like last night, I wasn't there because I had class till six, but...he moved all the furniture around so we could put our wood stove in. And went down and moved the antenna wire. I probably wouldn't mind the antenna wire, but he jumped on that and did that last night. Either one of us could have
done it, but he did it

As the foregoing illustrates, Virginia and Tom appear willing and eager to share anything with each other. Virginia comments on dividing tasks along gender lines:

We actually work at not doing that...When he wants to go do something or work on some of the house, I may not feel like doing it then, but I will go ahead and do it then because I want to learn how to do it. He knows more about engines than I do. When he's working on engines I go out there and try to learn what he is doing. I can't always do everything that he can do, when he's doing it. I don't have as much arm strength as he does. Sometimes I have to have him do those things. But I try to learn how to do it. One thing, in our washing machine, the filters get clogged up sometimes. The first few times when it happened, when we moved into our house, he always [unclogged them]. One time I was there washing clothes and he was someplace else, so it got clogged up. I decided then I wanted to learn how to do that. I do it.

Tom agrees with her and adds,

That's the biggest thing that stands out in our minds, is that neither one of us is afraid to share all the things that go on. Neither of us minds jumping in and doing anything that is there. It's nothing like it's women's work or men's work. We both appreciate the fact that there are things neither of us likes to do; if we both do everything then we're going to get to do the things we like to do as well.

Virginia believes that one reason they are able to share tasks so
easily is this:

I think that the important thing about that, I don’t take for granted he is going to do something and he doesn’t take for granted I am. Occasionally we do and we have to say “Now wait a minute, I don’t want to do that anymore.”... We look at each other like when the telephone rings. We look at each to see who is doing something that really can’t be stopped. I think we look at each other and we know what the other one is doing. We don’t have a whole lot of verbal cues. We just know when it’s our turn to do.

Tom believes he understands why their sharing works so well:

I always like to think... you put yourself in a position of always thinking what the other person might want, you know, if you were in their position. Consider yourself in someone else’s position and how you’d react if you were [them]—that is what I’m saying, and that’s why the sharing works so well.

In addition, he states.

...if we find that we’re not [in tune], we’re both sensitive enough to each other that we tell each other, “I really don’t feel like doing that right now” or, “I’m in a bad mood today” or something like that.

For the Shepherd/Walters family, constant communication, empathy and a willingness to share everything creates an environment in which tasks are performed smoothly and considerately.
Standards

Tom and Virginia seem to have the same attitudes toward life, and the same standards. Tom relates that,

"We are both very similar in our patterns....That similarity between us, I think, has been a real plus. The fact that we work together, think alike from a scientific method point of view. Things just flow because of that. We anticipate certain things. The organization is very similar, and that has helped us a lot over the years.

Virginia agrees about their similarities. She reports,

I think Tom and I have those similar priorities which I guess is important too for us getting along. We think the same things are important in our lives and we try to follow that. It's easy to understand when the other one wants to do something because we know why they wanted to do it.

There are, however, minor differences in standards between the spouses. Virginia has a somewhat different outlook toward child care. She says, "I don't think we necessarily clash on how to treat the kids...I worry more than he does about that." She thinks that at times she may worry too much and wants to be careful to not overdo her concern.
Another difference in standards concerns housecleaning. Virginia relates an instance of this:

I'm not really big on cleaning floors or vacuuming. But I do that some. Tom has a different threshold on that than I do. Doesn't bother me as much. I don't like spider webs in the corners. That doesn't bother Tom at all. I tend to do those things and he tends to do the floors.

The differences noted in the standards of this couple were remarkably few. Their similarities were numerous.

**Negotiation of Tasks and Responsibilities**

The preferred mode of negotiating by Tom and Virginia is “talking out things.” They negotiate when something bothers them. Tom says,

“So we sit down and talk. “What are we going to do?” “Let's talk things out.” If something bothers one person, then [we say] "Let's talk it out."

Tom describes the evolution of the task negotiation:

...we talked about things. Sharing. It sort of started working with gardening and stuff. We didn't have our roles then. It was pretty much doing our own things. But we started gardening and started sharing everything in the garden. Virginia was out there, we were running the tractor and doing everything. She was doing everything that I would do, and I was doing everything. So when it came down to cooking or anything, it just seemed natural. It was kind of ironic because my mother...
waited on me hand and foot. When I got my master's degree I stayed at home and she cooked all the meals. She did everything. It didn't seem normal having another human being there waiting on another one. It seemed abnormal to me. That's what Virginia was looking for. That's probably why we...like each other so much. So, we worked in the garden and we ended up working in the house. When it came down to paying the bills, we both hated the bills, sitting down and figuring that out. So, we said, "All right, let's just alternate, you do it sometimes, I'll do it sometimes," and if she had a lot of work to do at home and it had to be done then I'll do [the bills]. We try to catch that from each other. If I'm real tired she seems to jump in. Most of the time that's what it is. It's over, the years, 12 years now, it's been a looking and sort of get an impression of what the other one is doing. Every once in a while you run into some trouble because you don't notice. You don't think. And you're busy and tired yourself. Then we talk a little bit about it and we say, "I feel like I've been doing the dishes or "I've been cooking the dinner a lot more. Do you mind doing it? The other one jumps in and does it.

Negotiating is further described by Tom:

The bills are terrible to do and if we both sit down and do the bills then they're done in half the time or less. You don't have to worry about them. You move on to something else. But there are times when that just doesn't work. Like the end of last year, Virginia had classes on opposite nights than I did. We both had a lot of preparation work to do for our classes. We spend a lot of time [on that]. That time we sat down and said, "We're just going to have to work it out. I'll do three nights if you do three nights. Then we'll do it together on weekends." Like Sunday night I did supper so she could get ready for Monday. Monday night she did supper so I could get ready for Tuesday. So we worked it so it was
a specific pattern. . . I think in our relationship we have been pretty good at keeping in tune. You can see flow problems when you can tell it's happening, and we'll just sit down and try to work it out.

When the spouses negotiate, or "talk it out," often each one promotes his/her own point of view. Tom reports that he and Virginia believes that each has the right way. He believes that it comes from their academic professions.

. . . our biggest problem is, I think, we both are so used to. . . being in the classroom where we're in control of that setting that we both really think we're right, you know, we just feel very strongly that we're right. By feeling that, like we're right, then the conflicts come in where we both probably have a very good approach to something that may be entirely different, it's equally right too and so we stick to our guns and. . . then in the end it's sort of a compromise thing where we both realize, "Oh, well, we probably could do it either way, you know." We've just gotta come to that realization after sitting there looking at it for a while. . . . We started out that way but I think we've really, we've come to the point where neither of us sort of expresses that. It still creeps in somewhere, we end up having our little areas where we think we know more, and we'll take home our classroom attitude sometimes, where we have certain facts and we use those, but I don't think we draw it to extremes. I mean, we both seem to realize it real quick now, when we start doing that, and back down.

Tom and Virginia have found a way to negotiate that involves eventual compromise and shared task performance and responsibility.
Their negotiations may result in simply doing a task together, alternating doing a task or doing a task in a way that involves both spouses' expertise.

**Employment Flexibility**

There are few hours in the week when one of the spouses cannot get away to pick up a sick child. Virginia speaks on this:

> Usually it works out that we don't have class at the same time. Occasionally we have a semester in which a lab [Tom] teaches might overlap a lab I teach and there would be one hour of the week in which neither one of us could get away.

Tom adds to that:

> We don't consciously try to have it that way. Although there are some conscious efforts, like at least one of us not having an early class. Both of us having an early class [means] we can't get the kids, you know, Jeff to school...So that we try to do, but the rest of it we don't. So that's one thing we do a lot. Course we both are in Chemistry, and we can fill in for each other on jobs too. See, what will happen is not only do we help each other out at home, but our offices are right across from each other in the same department, so we not only play together, we work together. And so what happens is that when we're at school if one of us has to take off with a kid, the other could fill in on a class, and have the background to do it, so it's not like a big problem. It's a pretty unique situation.

Unique it is, and it provides flexibility for taking care of a sick
child or for taking care of family business. In addition, Virginia remarks that "Tom also has a couch in his office" so if one of the children is sick, the child can stay with Tom. She goes on to say, "Then I work in his office, when he is in class." They can even stay at work with a mild or moderately sick child, trading places at times and keeping the child comfortable.

Influences on Task Sharing

Tom was influenced in his task-sharing role by a personal experience that had many effects on his life. His father died when he was 12, which put him into the role of the oldest male in his household. He recounts:

Probably the most important thing was losing my father. And being thrust into a situation where I had a lot of emotions and [saw] a lot of people. I became a person because of that experience. Everyone seemed to come to me with their own problems. I was growing up, I was 14 or 15. It was a pretty formative time and ten on up until I was 17 or 18 it seemed like every friend I had would come to me when they had problems to help work them out. Looking at people's feelings, I was seeing things and being very sensitive to what people did and people taking advantage of other people and I just saw a lot of relationships.... I also had known a lot of people, couples, my brother included, had gotten into a very traditional lifestyle. I was older and I had seen all of that and hadn't really found anybody
and assumed I may not find anybody to marry. But Virginia came along as the type of individual who knew what she wanted. She knew where she was going, she knew the types of things that she wanted, so I guess I was seeing in her some things that I was impressed with as far as her personality. She was not going to take a lot of guff off of me. I guess I liked that. I had seen...my mother put down. As we got to know each other she appreciated a lot of the things that I did and knew. And I liked those. I liked her for certain things and she like me for other things and we just seem so compatible as far as work ethic--we both enjoy hard work.

Additionally, both Virginia and Tom were in their mid twenties, had traveled out of the country and had many experiences. And Virginia, according to Tom, was "essentially a 'women's libber' in some respects" which attracted him. The two of them wanted to share everything.

Virginia adds a note to the discussion of their task-sharing:

I really don't know. I know that Tom and I both don't want anyone to be mad at us. We like people to like us. Maybe that's why we are so sensitive to other people's feelings.

Each brings a sensitivity to each other due to life experience, and to the times in which they grew into adulthood. They both were interested in the women's liberation movement and it's goals of equality for men and women, and Tom at least, did not want to repeat
his family-of-origin experiences in his own marriage.

Career Commitment

Tom and Virginia's commitment to their careers and their priorities for their lives is summed up by Tom:

Job is not top priority. If we don't get a lecture written, then we walk into the classroom without a lecture. Then we talk to each other about it. Every once in a while you get wrapped up. We say, "Hey, if we don't get a lecture [done] we don't get a lecture." Sometimes that's just not going to work. If something comes up and we can't get it together, then we've got to. So, usually what it is priority-wise, we talk about this--I'm not sure we do it--but we like to put ourselves at the top, but most of the time we don't. But the fact that you're happy, we think of each other and make sure we have time and can do things for each other. And then the children and then the job.

Art Analysis

Virginia drew the family spending a day in the woods. They are walking along together under tall trees, over a green path. Tom drew a lively picture of the family camping together. He drew Virginia sunning herself on a boat in the water, Jeff flying a kite, Jeremy playing at the water's edge, and himself at a distance picking mushrooms. Included in the picture are one of their dogs, many trees, birds flying overhead, flowers, plants, more mushrooms and a tent.
Jeff drew himself and his brother and his father and mother playing in the forest among tree trunks. The younger child's drawing was not analyzed.

No drawings recorded tasks being performed.

The pictures of the spouses illustrate the outdoor life they love. Both pictures portray an active family, with similar interests.

Summary

The Walters/Shepherd family has achieved a sharing of household and child care tasks that crosses gender lines and extends into every area of family life. Their total task load [task performance + task responsibility] is equitably shared according to both spouses. Both Tom and Virginia are equally aware of what goes on in the house and what is happening with the children; and both respond to cues from the children and environment. The fact of their child calling the spouses both “Daddy” attests to their sharing of the parental role.

Usually the one who does a task is the one who is more available or free to do it. Or, if both hate a task, they find a way to share it and get it over quickly and go on to something more pleasant. They are
constantly negotiating tasks, constantly checking for non-verbal cues to see who needs to be doing what task—and both of them are in the middle of everything, doing everything. They find their lifestyle enjoyable.

Family Story, Family 3

Introduction to the Family

The Jeffersons, Margaret and Greg and their children, Mark, three, and Kara, a one-year-old, are residents of a small southern city. Their house is an almost-new, neat brick split-level with three bedrooms, kitchen, dining room, living room and family room. There are antiques among the comfortable furnishings. The house has a deep back yard with a patio and a tree house and play equipment for the children.

Margaret Jefferson is a certified public accountant in a large firm in Southwestern Virginia. Greg Jefferson is a landscape architect employed in the same city as his wife. Both spouses are employed in firms that prefer they work very long hours and some weekends. Greg
does not like to do this, while Margaret does. Also, Margaret's job requires that she work these extra long work weeks at times, while Greg's job does not actually require this.

Mark is a three year old who is very active. He is not yet in preschool. Kara is still a baby who requires constant watching.

This family is an extremely busy one, or was until they recently hired a babysitter who also does most all of the housecleaning and laundry in addition to caring for the children. Now they are still busy, but have some time in the evenings to spend with the children and with each other; and also some discretionary weekend time. Margaret described their life before hiring the sitter:

Well, I think it's just gotten to the point...where I just have to wear roller skates all the time to keep up. What we've been doing lately, if [Greg] has to work late, is I'll work till 5, pick up the kids and come home and start supper, feed Kara and try to cook something for us and he stays late and works until 6, 6:30, 7, something like that. Then he comes in and we eat and then I leave and go back to work and he cleans up the dishes and puts the kids to bed. It's just like this all the time. We never have time to all sit down.

Greg adds: "We just flat don't have any free time to do anything."
Allocation of Task Performance and Responsibility

This family had just hired a babysitter-housecleaner, so many tasks are not done by the spouses. Greg used to do much of the cleaning. Some of the tasks that remained for him after hiring the sitter were to mow the grass, tend the yard, take out the trash, fix broken things in his workshop, fix the plumbing and deal with contractors. He also mended his and Mark’s clothing, put away clean clothes, put their son to bed at night, disciplined their son, got up in the morning early with the children and painted all their Christmas cards. He recounted some of the tasks he does and doesn’t do:

...the thing I don’t do much of is cooking. I don’t like to cook too much. I don’t know if I’d mind cooking. A lot of the problems like with cooking is not being prepared for it, not preparing, it’s like this evening. I came back and Margaret didn’t come home until late; she had to go to the store and I got back and I took the kids out for a walk and I started getting things ready but when I started getting things ready I found out that the spaghetti sauce was frozen solid and that added another length of time to get that stuff unthawed and so I’ll say it wouldn’t have been so much of a problem but I wasn’t prepared for it. See, she put the stuff out and I didn’t know what to expect so then when I went to get supper ready it became a problem. Whereas if I’d have prepared it I would know what I had to do. But anyway, she does most of the cooking and I do more of the cleaning: clean off the table and all that. I’m pretty much in charge of the trash, taking
the trash out. Like I say now, before, I did a lot of the cleaning for us. It's really nice like I say, you come home and have the house look halfway decent. I don't know if you can tell but [Anna] keeps it vacuumed and cleans the kitchen, the bathrooms, and washes out clothes and folds them and puts them on the bed.

A benefit of having more time was described by Greg:

I really like being able to spend time with the kids, being with them, not having to necessarily be taking care of them, just spend time with them. Before our sitter, I'd have to be fighting [Kara] while I tried to do the vacuuming...

Margaret's tasks remaining after hiring the sitter are to keep up with both sets of relatives, mend her own clothes, pay the bills, shop for gifts, shop for food and clothing for the children, cook or put out food for her husband to warm up, and clean out the refrigerator. Child care tasks are to take the children to the doctor and dentist, put their daughter to bed, give first aid to the children and get up at night with the children. Her life, too, was easier since the sitter began to clean. She reported:

It seems to help, yeah, because [Anna] does all the housework, we don't do any of it. We just pick up a little bit and on weekends I might do a little bit, but nothing very heavy. Maybe mop the kitchen floor but pretty much I don't do anything. She does the laundry, folds the clothes and puts them on the bed so all we have to do is put them away. And Greg
usually does that.

Many tasks are shared, and a lot of these are child care tasks such as changing diapers, dressing the children, answering the children's questions, playing with or working with the children and giving baths to the children. They also share picking up around the house, shopping for household items, running errands and maintaining cars. Greg reports,

...We split baths, I give them one time, she gives it the next time. Getting them ready for bed [is] half and half. Diapers--I do half.

Margaret adds: "As far as the kids, we sort of split it."

This family has an unusual situation once a year at tax season when Margaret has to work every evening and Saturdays. During that time Margaret cooks and then Greg does the dishes and bathes and puts both children to bed every night. She describes the situation,

I have to cook. I come home and cook and eat and then I just have to go back to work and he pretty much does everything. He has to clean up the dishes then put the kids to bed.

During non-tax times, there were two routines: one falls more heavily on the wife; the other more heavily on the husband--depending
on who works late. Since each spouse's work schedule is unpredictable, they rarely plan how they will divide tasks. They usually just take turns.

While task performance is shared almost equally, with Margaret doing perhaps a little more than Greg, task responsibility is not shared as evenly. Greg takes responsibility for initiating visits with friends, for putting up clean clothes, for overseeing their son's behavior, and for deciding when the lawn needed mowing, but Margaret is the day-to-day manager of the household which she does with Greg's help. They share decisions about finances, deciding on movies and planning vacations. Margaret does almost everything else. She cooks and watches the children and asks Greg to do things to help her or to take care of a child--she was clearly the manager. The exception to this is during the three month tax season when Greg takes over almost everything to do with the house except cooking.

This couple shares most of the total work load (task performance + task responsibility) when it is considered over a year's time. This is due to Greg's doing much more than Margaret during tax season while
during the rest of the year she does at least as much task
performance as Greg and takes much more task responsibility. But,
she does somewhat more total work than he, perhaps due to her
ergetic nature.

Standards

Greg and Margaret have quite similar standards. They differ only
slightly about housecleaning. Greg said: "I'm into neatness and she's
into cleaning." He adds to this,

I don't like messes. I don't care if the carpet has a little
dirt in it. I don't like paper and stuff like that laying all
over the top of it or like that table. That bugs me and it
doesn't bug her, I don't think.

Margaret agrees:

That's pretty much true, like he would come in and pick
up all the toys and I would come in and try to get the spot
out of the carpet, but the toys I would leave alone.

Another different standard of the Jeffersons' concerns Mark's
behavior. According to Greg,

We had kind of a struggle between Margaret and me for
a while. Mark worked us against each other...if I had him
right here at home by myself in the evenings, like during
tax season I take care of him by myself and...I've never
had much trouble. I put him to bed and I tell him, the deal
is if you get up after you use the bathroom and everything, if you get up for any reason, you get a spanking and I've never really had any problems out of him. Now if Margaret puts him to bed he knows he can stretch it, see. So usually if I let her put him to bed then we'll sit down there 10 or 11 o'clock [he is] still coming back down and we were having a real problem with that for a while. Finally, Margaret agreed, you know, it was a little more than she could handle and when the two of us were here one of us had to take, be in charge of the discipline. That was sort of how we dealt with it.... Before, she and I would end up fighting like if one was handling the discipline, the other one would interfere, maybe and that was really taboo; you know, you don't interfere with your spouse while they are disciplining the kids and I think Mark picked up on that and he worked--he's a sharp man--I think he worked it...and finally Margaret and I agreed that if both of us were here, I would be the disciplinarian and I think it helps. We haven't had to worry much about it lately.

The spouses' differing task standards led them to negotiate these standards, which resulted in Greg's standard being accepted for this child care task. Other examples of negotiations follow.

Negotiation of Task Performance and Responsibility

The Jeffersons have established a pattern of who does which tasks for most of their tasks. They do not often negotiate tasks, they just go ahead and do them. If one spouse needs the other to help with a task, or to take over a task, she/he would ask the other to do it. Here is an example Margaret gives of task negotiation of this sort,
If I need him to cook if I'm going to be coming home late or something, usually I just ask him...Like who's going to give the kids their baths--like who's the tiredest.

If both spouses are tired, Margaret reports, "We'd say, 'I did it last night, it's your turn tonight.'" Or, they might bargain, or as Greg puts it, one would "trade-off" with the other. For example, one spouse would offer to do one task if the other would do another.

When neither Greg nor Margaret want to or feel like doing a task, Margaret reports what happens:

I don't know, we just, sometimes we just get in a fight and neither one of us does it. Or we just leave it, sometimes we just leave it. It depends. I'll try, usually I'll try to at least put the stuff back in the refrigerator and get everything neat in the kitchen and a lot of times we'll just maybe put the dishes in the dishwasher and not wipe up anything. Just kinda let it go.

Most tasks are routine now. And if one spouse works late, as is often the case, the other spouse just fills in with what is needed. Their employment dictates to a great extent who does what in the evenings and during tax season.

**Employment Flexibility**

Greg is often the one who stays home with one of the children if he/she is sick. He can make up work by staying late or going in on the
weekend if he needs to. Margaret can take off work also and make it up another time. She usually does this for doctor’s appointments for the children. The main hardship in this is that Greg does not like to work on the weekend, and Margaret already does work such long hours that making up time extends her already long day.

Influences on Task Sharing

Both Margaret and Greg grew up in households where the father did the outdoor work and the mother the indoor work. Greg recounts,

We both grew up, the mother took care of the house and the father worked... Margaret’s dad and my dad... they all, I don’t think they have any comprehension of all that it involves what that other person has to do... I honestly think that they don’t have any idea that there’s a lot of work being done [at home].... it’s like the big fairy does it all.

Margaret and Greg expected to share, however. As Margaret explains:

Yeah, I figured that out the first day I went to work. I always thought you’d go to work and come home and you had this long evening and you could do all these other things and I’d come home and it was 5:30 and I’d cook supper and ate and cleaned the dishes and it was like 8 o’clock and I realized then that you just couldn’t get it all done. Even when I was by myself and just had to pick up after myself. I mean we got married and moved in together, he had already been doing it and I just expected
him to continue. If he had done it all I would have let him. If he had come home and cooked and all that, I would have let him. It's easy to do.

So, expectation had a lot to do with the Jeffersońs' marriage evolving into a task-sharing one. Margaret adds the note that one reason she decided to marry Greg was that he changed his nephew's diapers when the child's father wouldn't do it.

Career Commitment

Margaret is more committed to her work than is Greg. He said,

She's more motivated to work than I am. I put in 40 hours and it just about kills me to go back. I mean it wouldn't be so bad if I didn't have a lot of work to do [at home]...I don't like to go back and put in overtime.

She agrees that she likes to work and gave a couple of examples of things that have influenced her career commitment.

When I was in school I guess I thought I'd probably quit after a while, but then again I got my first couple of paychecks and I realized how much money it took to keep the household up and to buy clothes for myself and go to the doctor and all that and I began to think it was probably going to take two paychecks for the things I wanted.... Another thing that influenced me, too, is when I had worked about a year and a half or two years, we weren't married, but a friend of mine that was married, all she wanted to do was have a baby and stay home so she finally did and she stayed home about two to three months and decided it wasn't all it was cracked up to be. And she talked a lot about it,
doing the same things over and over again and she wanted to go back to work and that really surprised me because I really thought she was one that would be real happy to stay at home and rock the baby all day and I thought, “Well, if she didn’t like it, I don’t think I would either.”

Margaret often works every evening and Saturdays during tax season, and she works late at other times during the year. Greg characterizes her as “almost a workaholic.”

For Greg, however, the consideration of caring for his children seems as important to him as his career. Due to the strain of the long hours of their two careers, Greg had considered quitting his job so that he could stay at home and care for the children and have some time with his wife. Greg thought he could get back into his career—more easily than Margaret—in a couple of years when the younger child started preschool. Also he earns less money than his wife and is less committed to his job than she is, so this seemed reasonable to the spouses. At this point the Jeffersons decided to try a sitter/housekeeper, so Greg did not quit his job. It remains an option, however, if the sitter does not work out. Greg speaks of quitting his job:

Yeah, we’d made the decision and all that. I’d talked to my
employer, told him I was probably going to quit unless I could work something else out. And I was going to take care of [the children] and then we got to talking out it and decided "Well, maybe it was worth trying to get somebody [for the children]." These days as far as your career, you know, a lot of people, we were talking about goals the other night... professional goals like "I'm going to be the greatest"... I don't really have those kinds of ambitions. I just felt like well, I'll just take care of the kids for at least two years and it wouldn't really have bothered me. I feel like I could get back into my profession pretty easily without losing too much. I don't know about Margaret; her field changes a little more rapidly... Salary-wise she makes right much more money than I do and that's why if anybody's going to quit it's probably going to be me because we couldn't live in this lifestyle on my salary. I guess mostly I work, I enjoy working, [but] it's just a job.

The sitter does seem to be working out for the Jeffersons. Her child care and household work gives them some relief from the grinding pace at which they were going.

Art Analysis

Margaret drew a picture of the family sitting on the grass by a campfire with a large tent nearby. Green trees cover the campsite and the sun shines between two of the trees. Greg drew the family in their backyard. He is standing and his arm is on the back of the chair in which his wife is sitting. Their son is swinging from a rope suspended from a high tree limb in the picture, and their daughter is
playing beside a Toyota truck. A two-story treehouse and a tire
swing are part of the picture. Evergreen trees form the background.
Mark's nonrepresentational drawing is not reported.

No drawings recorded tasks being performed.

The spouses drew efficiently and easily. The husband is an artist,
and his picture is more detailed than is his wife's drawing. Mark had
some difficulty with the drawing, and the spouses allowed one of the
co-researchers to aid him rather than doing so themselves.

Greg's picture is of the family at home together, while Margaret's
is of the family away from home camping. This suggests the
possibility that he may be more home-centered than Margaret--which
supports the fact that he has considered staying home to care for the
children to reduce stress in the family's two-career lives.

Summary

Margaret and Greg worked out a way of dealing with household and
child care tasks which takes into account the daily and seasonal
changes of each spouse's work time. Margaret is the household
manager and she contributes somewhat more to the total work load
than Greg, although they strive for equality. Margaret’s quick energy may account for the difference in the spouses’ contribution to the total work load.

Greg and Margaret have similar standards for household work and child care. These standards in one instance are complimentary to each other, and in another instance the spouses had decided (after negotiating) to go with Greg’s standard for child care.

Family tasks are divided partially along traditional gender lines: he takes care of the yard and trash and fixes plumbing and broken things while she does the cooking. But they share child care and any cleaning that remains after their sitter cleans for them; and they share car maintenance as well.

Family Story, Family 4

Introduction to the Family

Clair Scott, Fred Black and their five year old daughter Katy live in a brick ranch house at the edge of a small Virginia town. Mountains loom behind the house which is situated on a curving road. The house
has a large yard with a swing set for Katy and space for the family to be out-of-doors together. The spouses own two compact cars.

There are three bedrooms in the house, and a living room, kitchen with an eating area, a large downstairs room and a carport. The living room contains a piano, a large sofa, bookshelves made by Clair for the hi-fi equipment and TV, and there are one or two more chairs as well. One bedroom is a study for Fred and it is full of hundreds of books on bookshelves and a desk with a computer. Clair has a studio in the large room downstairs; here she practices art using various media. In this room there is a space for her daughter Katy to draw and paint.

Clair Scott is a slim person with a direct gaze, who is employed at a university near her home and who is a photographer with a national reputation. Fred Black also is an academic at a large university, who has published several books and maintains an active interest in the arts as well. Their daughter, Katy, is five years old and in kindergarten. Both spouses work full time at their jobs, and spend much time in the evenings and on weekends pursuing their academic interests.
The spouses' time is filled primarily with various aspects of their work and with caring for their daughter, and secondarily with household tasks and responsibilities. Sometimes they engage in social or recreational activities as well. They enjoy music and reading while at home.

Allocation of Task Performance and Responsibility

This family has been in the process of renegotiating task allocation. When their daughter was younger, the wife found that she did most of the cooking and putting the child to bed. Now the spouses have gone back to an earlier pattern in their marriage, according to Clair—sharing everything—but with "some differences." To this end, they now plan how they will divide up chores in a given week. Evening chores are divided in this way: "Now we're both fixing the meals together, we're trading off who fixes them and who puts Katy to bed and all that." Another way the couple presently share tasks is that on a weekend day the wife will clean house and care for their child while the husband writes in his study. Later he will care for the child while the wife goes to a meeting.
Clair performs many child care tasks and takes primary responsibility for the child's welfare. As she states:

I tend to pick up on what Katy needs at particular points, for example: cleaning up her room, knowing when to put her things in her drawers and knowing she has clean clothes, noting what needs to be done so far as getting her dressed, buying clothes or taking her to the doctor.

This statement is a mixture of both task performance and responsibility; and it exemplifies the way that the two are mixed together.

Tasks that Clair performs are buying presents for children in the family, constructing things for the house, and executing large household cleaning jobs. She, more often than her husband, will perform the tasks of straightening up the house and kitchen and picking up the child's toys, seeing to the laundry and putting junk mail away.

Fred maintains the outside of the house and cars. He sees to it that the lawn is mowed and any plumbing or electrical problems are taken care of, cleans the cars and maintains them, takes out the garbage and cleans the bathroom. Fred also does some child care
tasks: "I prepare Katy's snacks for school while Clair is getting her ready in her clothes. ... And I go downstairs and get a simple breakfast that Katy will eat."

Many tasks relating to their daughter are shared. Clair believes that "One of the things we share pretty well is parenting." Both parents answer the child's questions, supervise her bath, play with her, discipline her, read to her, take her to and from the sitter and both put her to bed. Other tasks they share on a regular basis are food shopping, cooking and washing dishes.

Fred is the person who is responsible for family business matters:

Anything having to do with official papers and keeping track of records, and this kind of thing tends to go through my desk....taking care of car registration, taking care of school papers, official documents for school, making sure we change hospital plans...and basic financial planning in general is in my lap....I do the taxes...the paperwork, the administration.

Clair takes most of the responsibility for their daughter Katy, as mentioned above. She also takes responsibility for deciding when the lawn needs mowing.
The spouses do not put a high priority on having a clean house. Fred relates that the spouses share "irresponsibility" for housecleaning.

Clair rejoins this remark with, "We share the blame." Shared responsibilities are deciding the house needs painting, deciding about financial matters and planning family outings and trips. In some matters, the husband will take responsibility more often than his wife: deciding what movies and plays to see and planning the itinerary for trips.

Most of the work is shared by the Clair and Fred. It is the general care for their daughter that is Clair's, and this is the reason she contributes more to the total family work load than her husband does.

Standards

Clair believes she is a tiny bit neater than her husband while he comments, "I imagine my standards of what I would like are basically the same...as what we will tolerate; [they] are roughly the same."

Clair describes the small difference between the spouses that she observes:
I think of myself as being a tiny tiny bit neater than Fred. Not a whole lot, but I mean I'm not as likely to get piles and piles of things. I get piles but I don't get piles and piles and piles of things... It's just a very small difference and I actually have come to think that's a fiction on my part.

Fred replies: My impression is that I would love not to have those piles and piles. In fact, they interfere with my life from time to time." Fred does agree that his wife is a slightly neater person than he is.

There is another way that this family has dealt with standards--this standard has to do with Clair allowing Fred to perform a task to his own specifications. Clair admits that "when he does [tasks] that he doesn't usually do, I get sort of picky about how it's done." She does less of this now than in the past.

**Negotiation of Task Performance and Responsibility**

Unlike other families in this study, the Scott/Black family has extensively renegotiated much of their task and responsibility allocation. This process of changing task allocation has not been an easy one for this couple. The arena of task negotiation and allocation is where a lot of issues get worked out in this family. Fred speaks on this matter:
When it comes to even jobs that both of us regard as relatively minor, you know, if you say something to the other person about the bathrooms in a certain way, that can communicate all sorts of things about your life together.

He adds further

I think [what] that says in part is that issues regarding daily tasks around the house, if neither person is primarily the domestic in the house, those issues still can be the ones when a lot of others areas of personal relationship can get either argued out or worked out or something so that you aren't dealing with totally neutral ideas. We are not.

One issue still being worked out in the family regards which of the spouses' needs were primary. Prior to renegotiating tasks, when time was short the couple fell into a pattern of the wife "doing significantly more" tasks than her husband. She commented: "I get upset with that partly because that's my time [to work], but more it's how I'm being perceived by him." As time is often short in this family and the wife was busy with her career, she resented not being accorded equal consideration for her needs. He, on the other hand, when under some kind of career pressure, in the past felt that household and child care tasks would be assumed by his wife.

The history of the spouses' careers and their effect on task
negotiation is important to the more recent negotiations. When first married, Clair was not sure what direction her career would take. It was important for the family that Fred succeed in his career. Later, when Clair's career took off and became as significant as Fred's, he saw "the home front...in a different way...more a symmetry, I guess."

Thus, due to Clair's career ascending in importance in the family, it became possible for both spouses to regard housework as justifiably divisible in half, and they set about intentionally dividing the work as fairly as possible and in the process began to change the old standards to which they had been socialized. Since Clair tends to be aware of household and child care tasks that need doing, she will often make up a list and the spouses will divide up the chores. Fred comments on this:

When we don't say "you're responsible for this area"...or "this is the timetable", it always seems like it could be done some other time. I'm not quite sure what my responsibility is anyway....I end up thinking "Well, I've just got to finish such and such a project." And I never get around to [tasks] ....If we don't have assignments, particularly if I don't have an assignment, Clair ends up acting first on that task, household tasks.
The household and childcare tasks and responsibilities now are handled with greater ease with a timetable, and both husband and wife do the tasks assigned to them in their mutually worked out agreement.

Costs to the husband of making this change in task allocation are that he must sacrifice work time to perform household tasks or take care of their daughter. Fred describes the situation this way:

...if deadlines for books are around, or long term projects are coming due, and that kind of thing, I start getting panicky and really anxious and feeling I don't have time to spare anywhere....I think it's unrealistic to write as many books, to do as much in that field, externally, with this kind of shared home responsibilities and so forth, that we have agreed is the best way for both of us. I think those goals have to be readjusted.

On this subject Clair says, "It takes a real act of will for him to shift his perspective a little...It's like it gets at a very deep level, I think."

Costs to Clair of change in task performance and responsibility are that she must adopt a new pattern of dealing with her husband and be more direct with him. "It's much more difficult for me to assert my wishes in that sort of way, in an effective way, than I wish it
was... I don't like articulating what all those little needs are" in order to reallocate tasks.

The result of this extensive task renegotiation is that the spouses are both more comfortable with the new pattern. Clair says, "It feels much better to me. I think it basically is to [Fred] too."

The renegotiation of tasks just described is different from short-term task negotiation where the focus is on one task. In this type of situation, one spouse may just remind the other that a task has not been done regularly and ask her/him to do it in the near future.

If Clair asks Fred to do a task and he is too busy, she may get very angry. She describes the process:

Usually what happens is I get really mad. I will just blow up. I guess what happens is there's a lot of anger. Fred usually gets angry because he doesn't think I'm being fair to him which is true in a way. Just angry because I don't think he's paying enough attention to just daily lives... We usually have a few days--after a period of time like that--that are pretty tense. I will sort of insist on having a certain amount of time off, basically, not from those tasks, but just to do something that I want to do. Maybe spending time with a friend or going someplace or whatever. I will sort of put him in a position of having to baby sit. Not necessarily related to the jobs I've been working on. It's like... "You don't
go fishing today so I can do such and such, that I've really wanted to do." Sometimes there will be some aspect of the work he'll pick up. If I have been doing a whole lot of cleaning and I haven't done the bathroom then he'll clean up the bathroom and that will make me feel a whole lot better....Then, it kind of, the tension, seems to go away.

Changing task negotiation is difficult for Clair and Fred. She sums it up this way,

One of the things we have to struggle with is that we are trying to change and live in so many different patterns and neither of us, we're both sort of even evolving why we would even want those patterns to be different...Our attitudes have really changed a lot since we got married, toward all this stuff!

**Employment Flexibility**

Both Fred and Clair are employed in academic careers. Earlier in their careers, before the extensive renegotiation of tasks/responsibilities took place, Clair had a larger share of these tasks/responsibilities than she now has. Of that period she says,

Because my situation was so undefined and undefinable at that point, it began to seem more and more like it was easier and easier for me to feel like I should do house [and child care] stuff.

Currently, both are available equally for the care of the child; and they try, by being intentional about task-sharing, to split the household chores. Clair states, "I think Fred and I have always had
more flexibility about household and child care stuff than the typical family."

Influences on Task Sharing

Fred was raised in a home where his mother stayed home and cared for the family. He remembers, "She never set foot inside any workplace." Drawing from that upbringing he relates,

...my image of career is certainly not one that was tailored to being fully involved in child rearing and doing a whole lot [of tasks]....My parents sometimes think we have a very bizarre family.

Clair reports that Fred's mother "was not a feminist mother, at all" and further adds:

...she has no conception of what it means in Fred's life for him to take our situation seriously....She sees me as being really driven toward a career....I'm like a raving maniac as far as his mother is concerned....One of the things we have to struggle with is that we are trying to change and live in so many different patterns.

The result of Fred--and Clair's--traditional upbringing is that, in the past, when they tried for new patterns of allocation of household and child care tasks, Clair reports that,

...all of a sudden we'll find ourselves relating in ways that...seem to have more to do with what we grew up
with, or something, than with just trying to get through 
this particular situation somehow.

Fred's experiences in his job have led him to believe that the 
world of work also has not adjusted to dual-career families and that 
makes it harder for people like him to get tenure. He notes:

My colleagues, most of whom are still older...have no 
image of the reorganization of family that is going on 
now because of more fully dual-career families...The 
institutions don't recognize the changes yet, very much.

With this lack of change, institutionally, in expectations of 
dual-career husbands, Fred, then found himself expecting Clair to do 
more than half of all household and child care tasks to aid him in his 
goal of tenure and of producing as many publications as men do whose 
wives do not work. The influences that Fred relates that have lately 
influenced him toward more sharing of tasks are:

I got tenure...and the other thing is that Clair's career 
and job began to take off and to do well on their own so 
that there was a greater sense of importance in both halves 
in an external work which meant, this is my interpre-
tation, that the home front, from my point of view was seen 
in a different way--for both of us there were things that 
were more important for us to do here but it was more a 
symmetry, I guess. As long as it was anything like the ol-
der assymetry of the family life in which I was raised, then 
it seemed just at gut level as though, when it comes right 
down to it, more her stuff here. You know--a traditional role.
Clair believes that due to her job becoming full-time and her photography being shown nationally, she has benefited both personally and in her marriage. She says, "I think I have a greater sense of self-respect....I think I can be more of a partner with Fred." Clair's status in a job that is a significant as Fred's has helped the Scott/Black spouses to overcome some of the traditional socialization that creates unhappiness over allocation of household and child care tasks and responsibilities.

Career Commitment

Both spouses are strongly committed to their careers. Clair believes she is less "driven" than her husband. She want to "make the very best work" that she can make, she says, "but I don't want to do that at the cost of screwing up Katy's life by not being present for her or destroying my marriage"--this would result in her feeling a failure and would make her art work "less significant" to her. But, she would not have married anyone who would not like her to have a career.

Fred reports he cannot write as many books, do as much in his field as other men who do not take household and child care
responsibilities; this is a different kind of career than he was raised to expect. He states, "My image of career is certainly not one that was tailored to being fully involved in child rearing and doing a whole lot [of household tasks]."

Still, he is committed to success in his field and wonders if he can achieve that given task division in his marriage. He must compete with other men whose wives do not full time careers.

**Art Analysis**

In the four pictures produced by the two spouses—three by Clair and one by Fred—Fred is performing more tasks than is his wife. In two he is attending to their daughter and in one he is fixing breakfast. Clair is attending to Katy in one picture. Both spouses are depicted enjoying private leisure while the other spouse plays with the child.

**Summary**

Fred Black and Clair Scott are attempting to establish an equal sharing of household tasks and responsibilities. The new patterns are succeeding to some extent and both spouses feel good about this change. Sharing is not without its costs for Fred: it will result, at
least, in fewer publications over his life time. The costs for Clair involve 1) giving up some expectations that Fred will perform tasks her way, and 2) forcing herself to be specific and assertive about what she needs from Fred. Clair gains time to attend to her career; Fred gains a closer relationship with his daughter, and a wife with self-esteem based on her career achievements, and who considers herself his partner.

Family Story, Family 5

Introduction to the Family

The Sinclair/Wade family resides in a contemporary house in a newly established subdivision in a small town in Southwestern Virginia. They drive a fairly new European car and have just purchased, second-hand, an older, large American car for basic transportation to work.

The house--which they had built recently-- is small, comfortable, and attractively furnished. It has three bedrooms, living room, family room with fireplace and dining area, kitchen and laundry area.
Outside there is a newly-laid patio, new grass, and much work remaining on the hillside behind the house.

Janet Sinclair, an energetic and warm person, works at a public health agency and is in graduate school at a nearby university. James Wade is a professional who runs a local government agency in a nearby town. Their son, Mike, is 4 and in nursery school. Both spouses work full time at their jobs; Mike is in daycare after school. In the evening and on weekends, Janet is involved in preparing for classes and for preliminary exams and working on research for her graduate degree; James looks after Mike most evenings and weekends.

This family's time is filled with work, housework, graduate studies and child care. There is a sense of purposeful activity in the household; this is especially apparent in Janet's behavior. An example of how busy they are occurred in the final interview held with this family. Both Janet and James sat on the floor and worked on some materials that Janet had to have finished for a research project while they talked to us and joked with each other.

Janet is always on the go: to work, to study, or working in the
house. She says of her husband and their household tasks, "He does it all; I just come in and eat meals."

James agrees that, "In many respects, now, I'm carrying a lot of the load." He does more household tasks than his wife and cares for their child a majority of the time while she works at her graduate studies. Because of these studies, added to full-time work, she is simply not available for childcare and household tasks.

**Allocation of Task Performance and Responsibility**

James does the yardwork, takes out trash, takes care of the cars, does outdoor and indoor household maintenance. Janet cooks, cleans bathrooms, does grocery shopping and buys clothes for the child.

James says that,

...we sort of fall into a pattern, because I think with the combination of our schedules I don't see its any kind of male/female division...she does more of the skilled labor and I do more of the unskilled.

This is the basis for their task division.

Tasks shared by the spouses but which the husband does the larger share, are child care and vacuuming. He reports, whimsically, that "Vacuuming is a fun indoor recreation". He also states that "I think
that when it comes to housecleaning, I'm just a little bit more anxious to have it done." Child care is sometimes difficult for him: ". . . I dislike . . . watching our son for a weekend while she is in the library." The couple also share the laundry and dishes, with the wife doing the larger share of these, and they also share taking Mike to the doctor.

While James performs more than half of all the household and childcare tasks—especially the child care tasks—Janet has the primary responsibility for managing the family. She views her husband as having all the responsibility for tasks—"James does it all"—but while in actuality it is he who performs more of the tasks, it is she who takes responsibility for most of these tasks. She plans: meals, vacations, for the child, gifts the family gives, and for shopping needs for all household items, for "family mental health", and she keeps tabs on their son's emotional well-being, takes care of budgeting and finances and initiates planning sessions with her husband as to how they will use their non-working hours, keeps in touch with both their families, plans family outings, chooses movies, arranges dates with her husband and invites friends over. These,
especially family finances, are somewhat time-consuming tasks. By contrast James takes responsibility for: "car stuff", deciding about yardwork, noting when laundry detergent is needed and deciding when he will vacuum. Some responsibilities are shared: for the cat, for dirt and cat hair around the house, monitoring the child when both are home and for deciding when it is time to do dishes.

The husband is willing to do more than half of the household chores and much of the childcare because he sees this situation as "temporary and something of a family investment" while his wife works and attends graduate school.

Standards

The spouses' standards for household dirt and clutter are different. James will spend several hours a weekend vacuuming and straightening. He says, "I'm a little bit more, I think, I'm neater... So I clean up more and she does it when she thinks it needs to be done."

And further, in regard to cleaning the house, "I mean I can't stand seeing it messy, so I will do it." Being "more anxious" than his wife about cleaning, he cleans more. He also likes to keep their bedroom
neat, while the Janet is more inclined to have the kitchen clean than is James.

Janet also has a standard for herself, relating to childcare: she has attended all their son's parent-teacher meetings, with one exception. She also has higher standards in regard to spending time together with James:

I'm the one that says 'we've gotta go out on a date and its gotta be this weekend because we haven't seen each other alone in five months and its gotta happen soon.'

She also initiates time together for all three of them, calls her parents often and while she doesn't call James' family herself, will "remind him regularly" to do so.

**Negotiation of Task Performance and Responsibility**

Many tasks were negotiated in the past in a manner the husband and wife are unaware of, and now the husband believes, "... it's just what would fall into a pattern, rather than, I think, an argument."

Many tasks seem to fall into this category. Yet, if tasks don't get done by the spouse who has a task performance responsibility, there is some "irritation" expressed at times by the other spouse.
Another way this couple negotiates is to give suggestions or ask questions. For example, the husband inquired, "Have you fed the cat tonight?" and the wife answered "No, I forgot about that". The husband then replied, "Don't worry about it, I'll do it. I just like to know so I don't do it over."

If a task to be done by James is creating strain for Janet, she will ask him to do the task within a time limit so it will be over soon. He will comply with her wishes and the strain will abate.

The spouses often use a cooperative approach to task allocation and almost never "won't do it [task] for each other", but will work out a way to help the other when a task is considered important to the other. The cooperative approach to task allocation is probably the most commonly used solution, by this family, for any task that does not fall under the "patterns" mentioned above. Usually, however if one or the other of the couple sees something that needs to be done, Janet says that they often do it themselves "rather than ask the other person to do it."
Employment Flexibility

James is not only more available evening and weekends than Janet for household and childcare tasks, but his job is considerably more flexible than hers in allowing time off for family business. He reports, "I'm more flexible since I'm the director down there; I can get away."

Janet describes her job as inflexible in these matters: You see, that's another reason why James gets stuck with more of the car stuff and like the child care stuff because his being the boss he can come and go as he pleases and I mean they like count minutes at the agency where I work.... so everytime I'm gone for 15 minutes or more I have to take some kind of leave. So the job is very inflexible.

This combination of James' availability for tasks during work time and non-work hours is in strong contrast to his wife's availability. Thus he does many more tasks than she does due to this availability.

The task-sharing style of this family is for each spouse to do different tasks at the same time, or to take separate aspects of the same task, working individually for common family goals. The wife may plant and water flowers while the husband mulches flowers and mows the lawn. The husband explains their task performance as "one
person being in charge of something" rather than doing one project jointly. The exceptions to this are that the spouses sometimes run errands together on weekends and do family things with their son.

Influences on Task Sharing

The spouses in this family do share a great deal of the work. Janet believes her husband's family influenced his task sharing as his dad did a lot of the work at home. James confirms that his family-of-origin influenced him:

The household I grew up in everyone had their assigned tasks, except my brother who didn't do anything. I think from just my growing up--and after that I just don't have a whole lot of patience in all this. I like to get things done if they has to be done.

Janet characterized her own family as a "female ruled matriarchy" and remembers that her dad did baking and other tasks therefore she "had expectations that my spouse was going to be participating in that too."

Another memory she has, related to her attitude about task sharing, is this one:

When I was 18 my sister, for my graduation from high school, took me to see the Broadway play Hair, and there
was this big black woman singing this song and it was about black people and white people. At the very end of the song the huge woman stood there on this stage and said "Shit, I ain't dying for no man," and I decided I wasn't dying for any white man, especially after the first relationship [ended in divorce]. If they don't want to share it with me, I don't want to share it with them and so to me it was a non-negotiable point that if I was going to spend my life with somebody, they were going to do the same things I was going to do--share the tasks and share the joy and share everything equally.

**Career Commitment**

In addition to wanting a spouse to share tasks with her, Janet wants to work and feels her career is very important to her. She believes her earlier marriage ended due to her first husband wanting her to remain home rather than have a career. James feels less engaged in his career:

I guess a career, my profession, has become less important to me. More or less a realization that what I do is... a less than honorable profession.

This may be an exaggeration of what he feels, but James is less committed to a career than Janet.

If Janet is to have time for a career, it is obviously necessary for her to have a mate who takes care of a lot of household tasks, and she does have this kind of a mate. She still does take most of the
household and child care responsibility.

**Art Analysis**

The family drawings produced by the Sinclair/Wades support some findings of this study. (See Art Analysis.) Janet's drawing of a "Family Pile On" underlines her strong feeling for family time and the importance of maintaining and nurturing family ties. The picture is a warm expression of their family having a great time being together.

James' picture, depicting the three family members on a trip, illustrates his instrumental role in the family—he is getting them somewhere. James is frequently the person who sees that the family tasks get done and facilitates their life together.

The child did not participate in drawing.

**Summary**

The Sinclair/Wade family is striving toward an equitable pattern of task performance sharing, and often achieve this. Janet takes much more household and child care responsibility than her husband, however, so that the total time each puts into performance/responsibility of tasks is not equal. Janet contributes
more to the total household work load.

The spouses conceive their task-sharing pattern as based on skill. James reports that he does the unskilled work and Janet the skilled work. Based on interviews and observations, it is clear that most tasks are divided along traditional gender lines with the exception of child care and house cleaning in which both spouses participate fully.

Family Story, Family 6

Introduction to the Family

The Moore family, Julie, Jim and their one year old daughter, Alicia, live with two golden retrievers in an older, brick house in an established residential area of a small town in the Roanoke Valley of Southwestern Virginia. They have lived there only a short while, Jim having been transferred to the area from the west by his employer. Julie and Jim are very pleased with the house that Jim found for them: it is brick with a wide front porch that has white columns. Inside is a large living room, large dining room, den, kitchen, breakfast room, back porch, four bedrooms and a large finished area in the attic. The
house is simply furnished in traditional style in colors of white and green and gold. Jim is redecorating the house, one room at a time, installing ceiling fans in some rooms in addition to painting and wallpapering.

The Moores moved to this area less than a year ago, and both assumed new jobs; his was a promotion with the same company and hers was in a new firm. Jim's employer helped locate a job for Julie in an effort to accommodate the Moore's dual-career marriage. She was hired in her present position in this manner, before actually moving from the west. Jim's company identified two or three positions that were open locally for which Julie might qualify and flew her to the area to interview for them. Both Jim and Julie are quite satisfied with their employers and with their present jobs.

Allocation of Task Performance and Responsibility

This family divides tasks this way: Jim takes care of the outside tasks, the trash and of the cars; Julie takes care of the inside tasks and of the child--with Jim's help. Besides the tasks mentioned above, he takes their daughter to daycare, pays bills, shops for hardware,
cooks dinner most of the time, feeds the dogs in the morning, irons his own shirts and takes care of "junk mail". He also does major indoor redecoration projects. He gets up on Saturday morning with their daughter so his wife can sleep late.

Jim shares with Julie: getting their child ready for daycare in the morning, playing with and reading to the child, and he shares the care of the dogs. Julie reports they split up the suppertime tasks, and "...if I'm [tending Alicia], he'll make dinner." Occasionally they will switch and Jim will feed Alicia and Julie will cook dinner.

Julie does more of the tasks associated with caring for their child: she feeds, bathes, and dresses her, changes her bed, administers first aid, disciplines her and watches over her--most of the time. Except for planting flowers, most of Julie's work is indoors or involves shopping. Other tasks she does are run family errands, buy groceries, purchase clothes for their child, wash, fold and put away laundry, clean bathrooms, change beds, buy most of the gifts they give, sew and mend, iron her own clothes and she does the larger part of vacuuming and the dishes.
The way they split up the tasks at supper, is, according to Julie
"... if I'm doing that [tending the child], he'll make dinner."
Occasionally they will switch and Jim will feed Alicia and Julie will cook dinner.
Household tasks seem to belong to Julie unless she makes another arrangement with Jim. For instance, Julie remarked with pleasure that "He cleaned the house for me so I didn't have to do it today".
Jim replied, "We had a realtor come through yesterday so I cleaned up the house. She was out getting her hair done"
When Julie is home she cares for Alicia while doing other chores. Julie relates,
...it's just harder when you're watching her, like if you're cleaning the bathroom, dusting or something, you've got her playing you know, she's not happy with things; it's just more time-consuming".
Both parents are involved in caring for the child, but just as Julie performs more of the tasks of caring for Alicia, she too has the major responsibility for those tasks; Jim appears to take responsibility for the child only when he is alone with her or when Julie asks him to do so. The mother nurtures the child, instructs her, makes doctor's
appointments, and keeps her safely within bounds; she decides how her needs for food, clothing, cleanliness and safety will be met. In addition to these major childcare responsibilities, the wife takes responsibility for seeing that these household tasks are done: housecleaning, laundry, dishes, shopping and shopping lists; and she is responsible for household needs and needs of her husband for special food and sundry items, for the child if she becomes ill and for keeping in touch with both their parents.

Shared responsibilities are planning vacations, for financial decisions and decisions regarding redecorating. Jim is responsible for deciding when he does yardwork and for the looks and general maintenance of the cars.

Julie obviously has far more responsibilities than Jim, especially those associated with their child. Jim says, "...taking care of Alicia is a big element of work. I would say that Julie does that 80% of the time". Sometimes in the past Julie has felt that Jim does not realize how much time the child takes. Jim now says that:

...Sometimes I think I overlook the fact that taking care of the baby is really a job and find the yardwork needs to
be done and taking care of the car, but when I go out and spend four or five hours, well, then she's burdened with Alicia and doesn't really have an opportunity to do things on her own."

**Standards**

This family accomplishes many tasks during an ordinary week, and the spouses appear to have similar standards for the accomplishment of most of these. But, the spouses differ on some standards. Julie relates, "I like things to be clean. I'm not upset about cluttered things as long as there's no dirt or there's no dog hair or something like that."

Jim replies:

Julie will leave stuff out to remind her to do something whether it be sewing or clipping a little ad to send away for some article--she'll leave it out on the table to remind her to do it. And that irritates me. But things which I don't consider as necessarily dirty is taking your jeans off at night and laying them on the chair because you're going to wear them the next day."

"That's not what I'm talking about--that's just messy," Julie contended.

"What do you mean dirty?" Jim asked.

"Like when this room had all the dog hair on the floor and on the couch and on...that kind of stuff" answered Julie.
Bob adds, “Well, if it’s apparent. I mean I occasionally will vacuum it, but I won’t go out of my way to [do it].”

“You won’t dust the appliances”, Julie goes on to say. “You see, that’s the kind of stuff that bothers me”.

Jim summed up this discussion by stating,

I think it’s a matter of degree, your own, our own, maybe idiosyncrasies. Both--I think by and large--we both like to live in a clean environment."

The differences exhibited by the spouses are played out in their household tasks; Julie will do actual cleaning, including dishes, more often or ask Jim to do it and Jim will see that things are “picked up” or insist that Julie not leave things around as reminders. In some way this is a complementary relationship in that the house will get both cleaned and de-cluttered due to the standards that each person has.

Another area where Jim and Julie have different standards, according to Julie is attentiveness to the needs of their daughter. She says,

I think sometimes that he doesn’t get as concerned about illnesses, doesn’t worry about Alicia if her fever goes up more than I will. He just doesn’t get as concerned; and like the dogs: I’ll notice right away if something is wrong
and I’ll worry about it more than he will.

Additionally, she comments “...I don’t think it would bother him if she [child] didn’t have a bath for about three weeks.”

As to bathing Alicia, Jim says, “About 4 out of 5 times Julie does it.

“She replies, “Usually if you bathe her--well, a couple of times you’ve done it without my asking--but usually I have to ask you.” The result of these differing standards for the child is that Julie makes doctors’ appointments for Alicia, and sees to her baths, bedlinen changes, etc., assuming a larger part of childcare tasks than Jim.

Different standards are evident when it comes to redecorating the house. Jim will take a week off occasionally and redecorate a whole room. He relates,

Usually what I’ll do, like at Christmas, I’ll take off a week and spend 5 days like fixing up a room like I fixed up the den. By fixing up I mean moving everything out, painting it, maybe putting up a ceiling fan, putting up the wallpaper, things like that.

When he does this, Julie says,

He’s pretty picky about painting and wallpapering and that kind of thing. He’d rather do it himself than risk the argument... He doesn’t like the way I paint anyway. We tried
that one time and he was not happy with the way we painted the windows and stuff so he would rather do that kind of stuff himself.

So, due to his standards for redecorating, Jim does these projects alone.

One other area where the spouses have differing standards concerns money. Jim: "Probably one of my prime criticisms of Julie is she never buys anything, one of anything."

She replies, "I think a lot of that is my upbringing because my Mom always did that. My grandfather always used to buy things in multiples." She adds that as a result of their different standards, 

...I'll procrastinate. I won't buy something because then he will be mad at me and then I'll wait until I need more than one of that particular thing so then when I buy it, like shoes or something, I'll let a couple pairs get really really bad to the point where I need to replace 2 pairs; and he'll be mad because I bought two instead of one.

Julie explains how she feels about their differences: "I feel like I earn part of the money in this house and I should be able to have them [clothes], so...but he doesn't feel that way."

"Sometimes we compromise like she's buying two suits that she likes and we'd agree she can get one," Jim interjects.
"He'll say, 'You can get one or else,'" Julie says in terminating the discussion.

The main way money differences affect the spouses is that Julie would like to employ a maid to help with the housework--and relieve the strain on the couple--but Jim refuses to hire one. This seems to be a continuing bone of contention for Julie and Jim, and Julie believes that if they have another child that they must hire a maid if she is to continue working.

Julie believes that she has lowered her standards for housekeeping a lot since marriage. She relates,

Well, my standards have gone down a lot since we got married. When I lived in an apartment and stuff, I vacuumed and dusted and everything was always kept picked up and clean. When we got married, we lived in our first house. I couldn't keep up with all of it. Jim [was] doing the vacuuming and stuff like that and he wouldn't do it all the time. He didn't think it needed vacuuming and he wouldn't vacuum. He told me "something's gotta give, you just can't kill yourself doing that [and] we can't afford a maid".

So Julie lowered her standards to avoid strain on herself and her husband, strain induced by her feeling the need for many tasks to be done.
Negotiation of Task Performance and Responsibility

In the area of negotiating tasks and making decisions about what needs to be done or bought, I have already described the negotiation over buying two suits, where Jim made the ultimate decision that Julie would buy one suit, not two. In money matters, he appears to assert final control and she acquiesces.

In other matters, the Moores use many other types of negotiations to decide task allocation. Sometimes they will argue about the general allocation of tasks and Julie will let Jim know how she feels:

... Well, I tell him I end up doing the greater percentage of the [house] work and I work just the same hours as him, essentially the same hours as he does and I feel like he oughta help out more. Usually that works for a while and he'll be better for a while.

Jim will then help out more for a while, perhaps doing a load of laundry and even ruining a piece of it in the process; or if he doesn't help, Julie will do what needs to be done.

Another negotiation strategy is to "wait out" the other to see whose patience will wear out first--and that person will then do the job; or one of them may try to make the other feel guilty by doing a
task when it is the others turn. Julie recounts that the task

... usually gets done and the person who considers it to be more important is the one who ends up doing it, is mad about it, makes the other feel guilty and the other one will help out.

At times the Moores will exchange tasks. One spouse may say

"I've done this for a while, now you do it." Or one spouse may offer to do one task while the other spouse does another.

Sometimes one spouse will ask the other directly to do something, and the other may agree or refuse to do it. Julie gives an example of a refusal:

... one Saturday we had to go out and do something. It wasn't looking at cabinets, but something in that line to do with the house that I didn't want to do and he ended up going himself. I told him, I said, "I don't have any more time than you do and you're just going to have to work it into your schedule sometime", so he did it.

Finally, if Julie wants something repaired and Jim won't do it, she may call in a repair person. She gives this example:

Like this dehumidifier, 'Look,' Jim, will say, 'I'll look at it,' and you never do so I would call Sears; and say [to Jim] 'I'm going to get somebody to come out and fix it; do you care?' and you say 'No'. I'll usually do something about it.
Employment Flexibility

The person with the more flexible job—as measured by the ability to leave work for family business or to take care of a sick child—may have greater care of a sick child. Julie reports her boss is "real flexible" about her missing work to care of Alicia or let in a service person; the boss knows she will make up the work another time. This allows Julie to get away more easily than Jim to pick up a sick child; and she is the one that daycare calls first if Alicia is ill.

Influences on Task Sharing

Although Jim and Julie do not share household and child care tasks equally, Jim performs a great many of these tasks to help Julie. He believes he was influenced in his task-sharing attitudes by his parents:

I think because my Mom got us involved in some sharing that is how it probably evolved over time. And the other things I was saying about my Dad, I think my Dad was to the point where he absolutely would not lift a finger and you know, I think growing up I always felt that was kind of unfair to Mom. I mean she used to work her tail off and then Dad would kind of bark out an order and all that. I didn't think that was tremendously fair and so I don't think its fair for me too do that to Julie.
Thus he helps her out a great deal with housework, and to a lesser extent with childcare.

**Career Commitment**

But do both of the spouses intend to maintain this lifestyle throughout their working lives? Jim is very work oriented and sees himself as a "borderline workaholic" who is "extremely involved" in his job. He is interested in long-term career goals.

Julie also thinks he is more serious about his job than she is about hers. She says, "I think eventually I'm going to stay home [from work] and do something more creative, I don't know. I guess I'm not real career-oriented."

**Art Analysis**

The Moore's art work illustrates Julie's orientation toward home—the whole family (including the dogs) is cozily sitting together on the couch. Jim's more outward-looking viewpoint is illustrated by his drawing of the family taking a walk together. It lends some support to the assertion that Julie's sphere is the home and Jim's is the outside of the house.
Summary

The Moores share a great many tasks. But, the child is 80% in her mother's care, according to Jim. Julie also takes the major responsibility for the house, for shopping and for the laundry and she performs a majority of tasks in these spheres. Although both spouses are employed full time, Julie contributes quite a bit more to the total household work load than Jim.

Julie is thinking of giving up full-time work if they have another child. She does not believe that she can work and take primary care of two children, given the way the Moores divide work presently.

Family Story, Family 7

Introduction to the Family

The Millers live in a comfortable home located on the outskirts of a small city. The house is surrounded by tall trees and there is a view of a pastoral scene from their porch. The neighborhood has many amenities: a pool for the children, a nearby shopping center and bus service into the city. The family owns two cars and a recreational
vehicle. They also maintain a boat at a nearby lake.

The Miller house is a four bedroom home with living room and family room, dining room and kitchen. There is a large deck on the back of the house. The house is furnished with antiques, wooden pieces mixed among functional pieces such as a sofa and a piano. There are attractive original prints on the walls.

Hannah Miller is an attorney in a medium-sized legal firm. She has a direct gaze and straightforward manner. Kevin is employed in a nearby town as an engineer in a manufacturing company. He is tall and relaxed in manner and likes to be involved in sports. David, their son, is seven and loves sports also. Anne will enter kindergarten this year.

Both spouses work full-time at their jobs. They do not usually bring work home with them although sometimes Hannah will go back to work in the evening or on a weekend afternoon. The spouses spend most of their non-working hours with their children: they enjoy recreation with the children, perform household and child care tasks while keeping an eye on the children and attend some social functions with them.
Allocation of Task Performance and Responsibility

This family has hired a cleaning service to take care of housecleaning. They find this to be helpful in relieving work overload for both of the spouses. The house is cleaned once a week.

Hannah takes care of most of the children's needs: she takes them to the doctor and dentist, buys their clothes, gets them ready for school in the morning and picks them up from daycare. She outlines her typical day:

...I get up and wake up the kids and make their breakfast...they eat a lot of breakfast. I mean we don't, I don't always cook something every morning, but there's a lot of mornings I make eggs or french toast or something like that...we believe in a good breakfast and I give them their breakfast and they get on the bus at 8:10. And when I leave, unless there's something gone wrong, all the beds are made and everything is picked up within reason. I mean there's not underwear and pajamas all over the floor and the kitchen is clean-looking, decent, looks neat...and then I pick up the kids in the afternoon usually between 4 and 4:30 from daycare and one day a week I come home so [I can be here when] they come home on the bus at 3. In the summer I'll be the one to stay home until the babysitter gets here and I'll be the first one home unless something goes wrong...I come home about 4:30 and one of us has to take the dog for at least a little walk which they are old enough now that I will let them stay here while I go around the block. It takes about 10 minutes and I don't worry about them too much. Then I usually collapse on my bed for half an hour or so
while they watch Dennis the Menace and then I fix dinner.  
...And then we both have to get the kids to bed, but ac-
tually I'm the one that really gets it done. He dilly-
dallies around and lets them come back for the third
dessert.

Kevin usually cleans up the kitchen after dinner. Then he spends
time with the children before their bedtime. Hannah reports that,

...when he's home he is available to them or more avail-
able than I am. I mean he always has spent a lot of time
with them...I mean he might tell them to go play but if
they wanted him to play baseball or they wanted to go
ride a bike...he is unlikely to say no to any of those
requests unless he's really had it. No, he does spend a
lot of time with them.

The spouses agree that Kevin performs 50% of the labor around
the house. He is the person who cares for the dog, takes out the trash,
maintains the yard and house, plants trees and flowers outside, sees
to wood for the stove, maintains the car he drives and washes and
dries the laundry. In addition to being available to the children
between work and their bedtime, he takes their son to soccer
practice, coaches the son's soccer team, takes both children to swim
team practice and takes care of the children while his wife works on
a weekend afternoon.

Hannah performs the tasks mentioned above, pays bills, keeps up
with relatives including buying gifts, does what sewing and ironing is done, puts away the laundry, maintains the car she drives, runs most family errands and deals with service people. She handles the children's problems, takes their daughter to dance lessons, takes the children to the doctor and dentist, disciplines the children and shops for them.

The spouses share grocery shopping, getting the children ready for bed, comforting a hurt child, playing with the children, responding to a child in need, encouraging the children, getting up at night with a sick child and helping the children with school projects. How the spouses share a chore, grocery shopping, is recounted by Kevin:

Grocery lists, well we operate differently...we very rarely grocery shop from a big list. We usually grocery shop for maybe a few things of the basic essentials--when we grocery shop we, she doesn't make me a list and I go pick them up. I don't make her a list...We just go and pick what needs to be gotten.

The spouses task-sharing style is for one of them to do a task while the other person does another job. A variation of this is for one person to do a task while the other person will do something with the children. Occasionally the Millers will do a task together, such as
clean up after dinner.

Both spouses participate approximately equally in performance of
the weekly household and childcare tasks. Each has her or his routine
on which the other relies. Task allocation has evolved over the years
and much of the work is done without discussion of who will perform
various tasks.

The spouses have more discussions about task responsibilities
because these have not evolved into a satisfactory routine for Hannah.

She speaks about some of these responsibilities:

So anyway we spend most of the evening doing... little
chores but things like piano... it really seems to me that
I'm responsible for remembering those things about the
kids. I think Kevin would probably let a whole week go by
and not have [David] practice and he has to have allergy
shots every two weeks and of course Kevin can't really
take him because it has to be done before Kevin can get
home [from work]... If I forget, I mean the biggest gripe
I have is if I don't do it or if I forget there's nobody going
to help out. I mean I'm on my own and you know
everything--haircuts, buying clothes--Kevin won't buy
his own clothes... All spring he's griped he has nothing
to wear. I have to get out the catalog and sit next to him
on the couch and say what do you want?

Task responsibility is a big issue in the household. Hannah
relates:
Well, I seem to be in charge of managing. I mean I feel I'm definitely the manager around here and probably that's because I want to be, that's what we... (Kevin interrupts with: "Hannah's the bossy person"). Yeah, but that's what we fight about the most I would say is not who is putting in the labor but who is taking responsibility and that's one reason Kevin does all the labor [that he does]: I mean I figure the least he can do is be good help.

Hannah will often take responsibility for tasks by making lists of tasks for herself and Kevin. She will tend to do this when she feel overloaded with too many tasks to do and too many responsibilities to remember.

Some of Hannah's responsibilities are: monitoring the children's behavior in large and small matters (as to snacks, piano practice, bedtime, clothing, etc.), disciplining and instructing the children, making appointments at the doctor's and dentist's for them when needed, attending to many other matters relating to the children (such as allergy shots, scheduling and taking them for haircuts and noticing when they need clothes).

Kevin takes responsibility for some small domestic matters (for instance, asking their daughter if she'd be warm enough outside in the clothing she had on, taking the dog for a walk, or asking his son if he's
going to Scouts), for when the yard needs mowing, for some outdoor repairs, for the woodpile and for his car. He also learned CPR and the Heimlich maneuver to protect his family if one of them should ever need it. (One did.)

The spouses share responsibility for choosing major purchases and choosing vacation sites. These are discussed and decided together.

Task performance and task responsibility have evolved into two different domains in the Miller household. Task performance is quite well worked out; task responsibility is discussed from time to time and has yet to be satisfactorily resolved--at least for Hannah.

Standards

The husband and wife have different standards for household and child care tasks. Kevin reports general household standards differ:

I tend to like things, let's see, I tend to get frustrated by messy things but dust and things like that don't bother me . . . What happens is things tend to build up and then I get frustrated and then I put them away and I go through the house frustrated and putting things away. But there seems to be sort of a minimum level at which I can live . . .

Hannah agrees:
...I like it neater than he does. But you know, that's not entirely right, I sort of keep things, I like things kept up as you go along. And Kevin would be, he's more the type where he'll wait till it's totally trash and he'll throw a total fit and clean up the whole thing.

Hannah thinks she is less lenient than her husband with the children and that they then take advantage of him. She relates, "He's just more lenient with them on most everything."

In the two areas of task performance--household and child care--the spouses differ to some degree. Hannah tends to keep up with household messiness on a regular basis and she also tends to be less lenient with the children than Kevin.

**Negotiation of Task Performance and Responsibility**

Negotiation of task performance is somewhat infrequent at this stage of the marriage--tasks just usually get done. When tasks or task responsibilities are negotiated the negotiations may take place in several ways.

Primarily, Hannah will nag Kevin until he does a certain task. She describes this type of interaction:

I think I nag a lot. I feel like I do...If I keep it up long enough [he will do the task]...I guess the way, if I really
wanted him to do it, is I'll just bug him and bug him and nag him and nag him. . . . I just have to be really persistent.

Sometimes nagging Kevin backfires, and he will resist doing the task. He says, "I will just try to ignore, I will try to laugh it off." At this point if one of them feels that task allocation is unfair she or he will "blow up" and then the spouses will readjust their patterns temporarily. Lists also backfire sometimes for Hannah. Kevin reports, "Lists. . . . No, that's one thing that really pisses me off. That is counter productive." He adds,

The scenerio is, she starts feeling like she's got too much responsibility so she gives me these lists, time-tables and says "You have to do this this afternoon and you have to do this tomorrow morning", and I will generally rebel at that and then. . . . it'll be confrontational, sort of explosive. It doesn't happen that often. I mean normally things move on pretty smoothly.

Kevin feels that such conflicts are never really settled and that the marriage works all right because he is more flexible than Hannah and he states, "She thinks I'm wishy washy and I think she's rigid." An example of these flexible/rigid attitudes--at the children's bedtime--is given by Kevin:

She feels [if] it's 8 o'clock, the kids have to be in bed and if they're not in bed the world is going to end and I don't feel
that way about bedtimes. I think if I were a single parent that wouldn't be quite so big of an issue and so I don't think I'm shirking responsibility of making sure the kids have to be in bed at 8 o'clock. When it comes to 8 o'clock and it's time for bedtimes, I'll help, I'll pitch in...so I think that's the way it gets resolved. I'm perfectly willing to say that 8 o'clock is bedtime...She wants to be rigid about 8 o'clock, that's OK. I'll help her get the kids to bed at 8 o'clock...I think that I am willing to do enough stuff that she doesn't feel totally like she has to do everything, you know...I'm not sure that she accepts my premise that I'm taking responsibility, just in a different style.

In addition to nagging by Hannah, task negotiation can take place when one of the spouses initiates a trade. One may say to the other that several things need doing, and "if you take this job, I'll take the other."

Another way tasks are negotiated is in a roundabout manner. Hannah will start a project deliberately, then engage Kevin in the task by asking him to help. He will usually join her in doing the task.

Negotiations often concern task responsibility, not task performance: Hannah would like Kevin to assume more responsibility. He states that "I think that why she feels like she has more responsibility is because she takes it upon herself." This statement brings the discussion back to standards--if Hannah has higher
standards than Kevin, she will take more responsibility on herself for tasks.

**Employment Flexibility**

Hannah can get away from her job to attend to family business or a sick child much of the time, but, she relates, "...when I'm really busy, I'm not flexible; it just depends on the work load." Kevin's job is less flexible, but when Hannah is not free he can take off time. He says of his job,

> It's pretty inflexible. I really need to be there at 8 and I really am expected to stay there until at least 4:30. And even to the point that it's the first place I've worked like this and there's a lot of advantages to the place but I think they are pretty pissy about this. Even if you have to go to a funeral, for example, if I had to go to a funeral, I would be expected to make up that time.

So, Kevin can take off time, but must make it up. He rarely does this unless Hannah cannot take off, or there is some important family event he needs to attend.

There is one further aspect of employment flexibility that Hannah brought up. She sees in job flexibility "a trap." She relates,

> ...well, either you start expecting yourself [to do tasks] or the rest of the family considers you're the one that's
available, and therefore I think in one's own mind as well as everybody else's in the family... that translates into "you have more time" or "your work's not as important".

She sees the more flexibly-employed person as sliding into task performance and responsibility without thinking to refuse the tasks/responsibilities. She adds this thought: "...and then you get to be the only one that ever thinks of it too."

Influences on Task Sharing

The spouses were asked what if any were experiences from the past that influence the way they share tasks in their family now. Hannah stated that she came to expect task sharing as a way of life because she is lazy and does not like to do every thing, so--"nothing else would be fair."

Kevin related that it was not his home life that influenced him to share tasks, but rather college experiences that were influential:

So, at home, all the time growing up, I never did housework. My mother never taught me to cook, and so then I went away to college. ...You know, probably where it happened was my junior and senior year at college I lived with a group of people, there were probably 10 or 12, and half of them were just raging feminists at the time, this was in the mid-to-late 60's, so my consciousness was raised many levels and that was a sharing situation. Half men and half women, we were expected to share, share all the responsibilities and
tasks...and we took turns cooking and shopping and these women, they were all different, but they were all women that I thought a lot of and they varied from real outspoken feminists to more mild-mannered and yet still very strong.... So that, I would say, that had quite an influence and...I think for some reason...I tended to associate with people who felt that was the right thing to do in the late 60's. Most of my friends were those type of people who felt that men should share responsibilities with women...I do strongly feel that women shouldn't be saddled with the drudgery of housework all their lives.

The Millers seem to have found common ground in their experiences and expectations: fairness. And, they have woven this into their way of life.

**Career Commitment**

When asked how important her career is to her, Hannah replied:

I think it's real important to me. Even though there's times when I say I could walk out and never go back. I don't think that really, I mean that. In fact, even those times when I'm not real busy I get restless. I mean I really do best with a certain amount of pressure. It's not everything and I think that would be the case whether I had kids or not.

Kevin's career and Hannah's are equally important according to him. He recounts making career sacrifices for his family:

I have made conscious decisions that...there are things more important and I think I've made career choices that had I been single would have been a lot different...I've
decided that I would much rather live with the family in a small town, and that I would not be willing to take a job that required me to work late at night and never come home, and [that I] wouldn't move a lot.

Hannah and Kevin also had made an agreement about where they would live after he finished his master's degree.

People in my class were interviewing for what sounded like, I think, sounded like real interesting jobs and my options were a lot more limited because, since Hannah had her practice here we, part of the deal was--this was a deal--part of the deal was that we would move here, I could go to school and when I finished we wouldn't pull up roots and leave. So, I mean just that very first decision was... I wouldn't take a job like all these other people were taking. I would look around here and find something and I found something...and so I've always felt like I had to keep my eyes open because there's not that many things around here and if something comes up I need to decide whether I want to do that or not. So the whole fact that we're here and that I don't have a lot, there's not a whole lot of opportunities, I think has a lot to do with the fact that was a decision I made: Hannah had her practice, that was established.

The Millers seem to have worked out a balance between their two careers that give both careers importance, but make neither one primary. Some of their spousal career decisions have been based on having children, and wishing to bring the children up in what the couple consider to be an optimal environment for this purpose.
Art Analysis

Both spouses drew a picture of the family in their boat on a lake. Hannah added two water skiers to her boating picture. David drew the family bicycling together. The kindergarten-age daughter, Anne, drew a stick picture figure of herself with a huge smile and added colorful triangles to the picture. None of the pictures offers information on family task performance or responsibility.

The process of drawing the picture was an intense one for the children. Anne did not wish to share chalks with anyone and was upset when her mother insisted on sharing chalks with her. Kevin would get up from the table where he was working and cross the room when he needed a change of chalk color, in order to avoid an argument with his daughter who was sitting near him but did not wish to share chalk. David had great difficulty getting his picture to look like he wanted it to look. He was upset and cried a few tears. Both parents encouraged him—then finally his picture-making was discontinued, to be finished another time. (He did finish the picture with a pencil, later in the week.)
This task provided some information that confirmed information gathered in participant observations and interviews. First, the husband/father would rather avoid possible conflict, while the wife/mother was more apt to negotiate. Both parents were observed encouraging their children and comforting a distressed child, as had been observed before. Additional information not heretofore observed or spoken of was that the wife tended to be the one to discipline a child, rather than the husband.

Summary

The Millers are consciously working toward a fair and equitable allocation of task performance and task responsibility. They seem to have achieved a fair division of task performance; task responsibility remains primarily with Hannah. Hannah, therefore contributes more than half of the total family work load.

Both spouses consider their aim of an even split of the total household work load as one based on fairness. Both believe that women should not have to do most of the household labor if they are employed. Tasks are divided so that Kevin has the outdoor tasks and
Hannah the indoor ones to some extent. Kevin, however, washes the
dishes and the laundry and cares for the children, and Hannah
maintains her car, so the indoor/outdoor split is not absolute.

Family Story, Family 8

Introduction to the Family

The Sandersons, Melanie and Dave, with their five year old
daughter Sarah and 18-month-old son Jonathan, live in a new house in
a pleasant subdivision of a Southwestern Virginia town ringed with
mountains. Their neat yard has a pool for the children, a storage
building, a swing set and a patio.

The house is two-story, and contains three bedrooms, a living
room, dining room, family room and large kitchen. The house is
furnished with cool blues and pinks and is neat, attractive and
comfortable. Melanie made many of the decorations that are around
the house.

Melanie Sanderson is employed as an administrator in a large
government agency. She is working on a Ph. D. at a nearby university.
Dave Sanderson is a special education teacher in a nearby school district. He has completed all classes toward a Ph. D. Both spouses work full-time at their jobs, however Dave has 10 weeks off in the summer, when he cares for the children. Sarah is a kindergartner, vivacious and enthusiastic about life. Jonathan is a very lively boy who must be watched every minute.

This dual-career family is an active one. The spouses are busy with the children, and with household tasks, shopping, some extracurricular activities, church attendance and visiting with friends. Their pace, while busy, is not hectic: it seems purposeful and child-centered.

Allocation of Task Performance and Responsibility

The Sandersons have hired a cleaning service to take care of weekly household cleaning. Dave reports that,

...during the school year we have a cleaning service come and do the full house once a week and we just clean up as we have to: wash dishes, run the dishwasher, that kind of thing. So we really don't do a lot of housework during the school year. We pretty much leave it to once a week.

Melanie does many regular chores inside the house: she cooks
dinner and cleans up in the kitchen at night, makes lunches for the family and sees that everyone has clean clothes for the next day.

Chores done by her that occur less often include fixing broken things and going through boxes for seasonal clothing changes, planting flowers in the yard and cleaning out the refrigerator. She also is the person that keeps in touch with kin.

Her husband relates some of Melanie's chores:

Melanie...does things like make or at least plan lunches for the next day, all three of us most of the time all carry our lunch so we have to make them the night before, and either she get the stuff out and we do it when I come down from putting them to bed or she just does it, takes care of that kind of stuff. She sees that we all have clothes for the next day.

Dave takes care out most out-of-doors chores: he mows the lawn, trims shrubs and maintains the cars. He also cooks breakfasts, does large cleaning jobs, repairs things around the house, and lets in service persons. Dave also transports the children to daycare, gives the children their baths at night, gets the children ready for bed, keeps the children all day long during his summer break and takes their daughter to gymnastics.
Many tasks are shared; they may be shared simultaneously or performed at different times. Melanie relates:

Washing would be both of us. . . . Child care is both of us. . . . things like transporting [children] to and from day care has been Dave. Getting ready for bed and stuff is pretty much of a joint [activity]. . . . Dave will say "I'll go get the tub rolling while your clean up the mess". . . . Things like buying clothes we often do that all together. I guess I might say so and so needs such and such or things like we're out of this or whatever, but we frequently go as a family outing--that goes for all our clothes really.

The spouses share other household tasks such as making out the grocery list, running errands, buying gifts for family and friends and dealing with junk mail. Child care tasks they share are seeing that the children are dressed in the morning, giving first aid to children, disciplining the children, reading to the children, comforting children, getting up at night with a child, taking the children for doctor's appointments, monitoring (babysitting) the children, playing with the children, putting the children to bed and changing their son's diapers.

Task responsibility, while shared, falls more into Melanie's purview. She says,

Probably I do a lot of the organizing in terms of planning things, or scheduling types of things. . . . Sch
duling routine [doctor's] appointments, I usually do... again just because I keep a better track of the calendar and what we've got going on....Any arrangements in terms of babysitting I do the calling and getting that lined up.

Dave concurs with Melanie that she is the family planner and adds this:

I think it's what we do the best. We know what we do best or what we do comfortably. We talk about the organization, that's just something that comes naturally to Melanie. It doesn't come naturally to me.

Melanie takes care of meal planning, and she plans what clothing items the children will wear, decides what gifts are appropriate for family and friends and initiates visits with friends. She is very efficient and can do many kinds of organizing during a given time period: clip coupons, fix lunch, plan the afternoon's trip, wrap a gift and talk to their daughter.

Dave takes responsibility for deciding when yard work needs to be done and when cars need to be taken for servicing.

The spouses take joint child care responsibility for: monitoring (babysitting) of the children, playing with the children, calling the doctor if a child is ill, and disciplining the children. (The husband takes responsibility for the children as opposed to "helping out" with
Joint decision-making involves planning vacations and financial decisions.

The spouses tend to perform many tasks separately at the same time. Some tasks are performed together, as putting the children to bed or doing family shopping. At times one spouse will watch the children so that the other can do some task.

The husband and wife share equally the total household and child care work load—that is, they each take approximately half of the total of both task performance and responsibility work. Melanie believes that,

To me, I think on a given day one of us might do more [tasks and responsibilities] than the other, but really, I think in the whole scheme of things it balances out.

Dave adds,

I think that we both know that, sort of. When the situation comes that one of us works harder than the other or may have done more tasks, it's either because of circumstances or whatever—I don't think we keep score.

Sharing the total work load is important in this family, not who takes more responsibility or who performs more tasks. Melanie takes more responsibility as has been pointed out. Dave, however, does
more tasks. This results in an approximately equal sharing of the total work load, not in an approximately equal sharing of the separate areas of tasks and task responsibility.

Standards

Over the years, Melanie has set the standards for things like laundry, meal preparation, cleaning up and how much TV Sarah will watch. Dave has gravitated toward Melanie's standards although the spouses' standards have never been radically different. Ed seems to prefer to follow his wife's lead and states,

If anybody set standards or puts limits on things or a benchmark over the 11 years that we've lived together, it's probably Melanie. But it's hard to say exactly what those things are, in what area and how much influence or quiet influence I might have too. I mean it gets to the point where who knows who's setting what.

The spouses have very similar standards for child care. Melanie says they are careful "not to give mixed messages" to the children.

The spouses do have somewhat different standards in some areas. One concerns the amount of time the children stay in daycare. Dave will leave them there an extra hour or so to prepare for the next day's work or to go to a meeting or occasionally to go to a basketball game
in which his students participate. Melanie would rather Dave did not leave the children in daycare the extra amount of time.

Financial decisions, although jointly made are approached differently by the spouses. Dave tends to worry less about money while his wife is more cautious. Melanie gives an example of how the spouses differ:

...he would still spend a lot more freely; if it was up to him we would eat out five nights a week. That's fine with him and he really thinks we work hard and we deserve that and that kind of thing where I'm like...I'm just a lot more cautious. ...we've really kind of mellowed each other over the years till now that's not a big deal and we pretty much if we want something we get it and it's not a big hassle.

Maureen has a standard of behavior she expects from Dave, when she is working and he is home with the kids in the summer; she expects him to work all day and not to pursue leisure activities. She said that if he did, her reaction would vary, and she relates,

Sometimes, again depending, like again if I came home and I was really frustrated and felt like I had been through the wringer, it might be passive-aggressive like, "Boy, it looks like you had a nice day". And then other times I'd say, I mean it would be up front like "Boy, this just doesn't feel good to walk in after I've been through blood, sweat and tears and you look so cool and calm, you know, it's not fair".
Standards, in the Sanderson house, are mostly quite similar at this point in their marriage. Melanie is the standard setter in many cases because she is the one who takes the responsibility for initiating, organizing and reviewing a task—which she expects to be done to her standard. There is little problem with standards as Dave is comfortable with Melanie's standards most of the time; and he feels comfortable with departing from them somewhat as in taking extra time for his work needs even though this means an extra hour for the children in daycare of which Melanie disapproves.

**Negotiation of Task Performance and Responsibility**

The spouses negotiate tasks cooperatively most of the time. If a task is important to one of the spouses, the other will help or free up time for the one who wants to do the task. They will negotiate times to do a task, with one taking the children so that the other can do a task or they will do a task all together. Melanie reports:

> I can't think of any time when one of us thought that something was really important or significant to do and the other one just really balked at it.

Another way tasks are negotiated is by Dave, for instance,
explaining to Melanie why something needs to be done in order to
maintain the house or car prudently. She relates,

I think, like little minor things might come up that...like
the car. I don't understand any of that stuff, but I always
think it's a waste of money to take cars in and several
times a year Dave has to go into this big explanation with
me...Those kinds of things where you really have to do it
now, or is it really necessary to spend $100? Sometimes
I won't understand it or whatever, but I'll just trust his
judgment on that and go along with it.

The differences are resolved by Melanie acquiescing to Dave's
expertise.

Another type of task negotiation is triggered by Dave's forgetting,
or not getting to, a task that Melanie had asked him to do. She relates
that,

Sometimes I get real disappointed and I guess really we
talk about that how that I really, I really don't like the way
this is happening or whatever. We don't have fights. I think
it's more frustration and wishing things were different and
that usually doesn't last very long. I mean we both really
do a lot of...stuff in terms of reality therapy. We just bring
it back in terms of all that we already do, and how much
can we do...

She adds that other times,

"...I try to help by writing notes and all that kind of stuff.
Dave runs errands on the way home from work, and we'll
write down things and he'll take a dash for it.

The spouses appear to have most negotiations already worked out; they have found patterns for dealing with most of the everyday household and child care tasks. What negotiations there are tend to be working out cooperative agreements that facilitate getting tasks done. Other negotiations center around tasks that are not done and these tend to be worked into the next day’s schedule or given up as being too much overload.

**Employment Flexibility**

Both spouses have somewhat flexible work schedules. Melanie describes her situation:

The position I'm in now allows me to be a little bit freer about leaving, coming and going. I'm not on a time clock or don't keep a time card or whatever. I've got set hours and am expected to be here between 8 and 4:30 but if something should come up my supervisor is really pretty understanding about my leaving...If one of us gets sick and I have to stay home I have so many sick hours that I can use for sick family, above and beyond what I can use for myself. Then, I have a pretty strong...work ethic, so I'm really very careful about doing that.

Dave's employment flexibility situation is similar to his wife's in that he can leave work is necessary. He relates:
There isn't any, hasn't been any difficulty [leaving work to pick up sick child]. That has happened. I have a teacher's aide, full time, but I also, I haven't run across a situation where any teacher that I've observed in my school has been denied that opportunity if a child has to be picked up.... Again, it's not any problem for me to stay home because built-in mechanisms of having the substitute teachers allows that flexibility for teachers, within certain limits.

Dave gets off from work at 2:30 which allows him to take a sick child to the doctor after work; this isn't possible for Melanie.

Both Sandersons have much institutional flexibility for caring for sick children built into their jobs. Both can use personal sick leave for family sick leave, and in addition, Dave can get a substitute if he needs to miss much work.

Influences On Task-Sharing

Dave's father did not share child care or indoor household tasks with Dave's mother. He recalls: "My mother takes care of the house and my father takes care of the yard and cars and things like that."

Yet, he goes on to state:

I think that Melanie and I both realize and I always have that that wasn't really necessary to have that kind of typical division in terms of child care. Especially with the advent of [women's] working...Yeah, I think...that certainly is an influence and from when I first knew Melanie, she's not the type of person, to, she would not
be happy staying at home, you know, for weeks and months on end.

Dave and his brother were expected to perform tasks at home—although they did not do dishes or cook—and to look after their belongings.

Melanie's experience in her parental home was different. Her mother and step-father shared household tasks and she participated. She reports,

The way our tasks were divided when I was growing up I mean, was pretty much, when my mom remarried, my dad would run the cleaner and Mom would work in this room and I'd work in this room so it really was everybody working together. So I'm sure that's a lot of it. I'm sure.... It probably would have been very shocking to me, I don't know if I could have married somebody who wouldn't do that. I don't remember us talking about it when we were dating but--on out first date he cooked supper, so I mean, that probably was a clue to me that he wouldn't be helpless.

While the spouses experiences of task sharing when growing up were different, they seem to have worked out a satisfactory sharing arrangement for themselves. Dave's statement that women's working was an influence on their task sharing seem to be an important piece of information in the understanding of Dave's and Melanie's approximately 50-50 sharing of the total work load.
Career Commitment

The Sanderson's are both committed to work and careers. Melanie's career is very important to her. She "would not be happy being home" all the time. She plans to finish her doctorate this year. Dave's career is important to him, and he would like to change from teaching to public school administration in the future and has taken classes to prepare for this, in addition to working on his doctorate. Both spouses believe their present jobs are not advancing their careers at this time, and anticipate some changes in the future.

Art Analysis

Three of the four Sanderson's drew a picture--all except the toddler, Jonathan. Melanie drew a picture of the family at the beach and included her parents, as they often vacation together at the beach. Dave also drew a happy beach scene. And Sarah, too, drew a beach scene, with the family out riding the waves and a huge sun shining down on them.

No drawings recorded tasks being performed.

The three pictures give a sense of oneness, or sharing the same
outlook, the same sense of fun—that the spouses present in their approach to household and child care tasks in daily life.

Summary

Melanie and Dave Sanderson have worked out an approximately equal sharing of the total family work load comprised of household and child care tasks and responsibilities. Their well-established sharing patterns function smoothly for them most of the time, requiring little negotiation of tasks.

The spouses have remarkably similar standards for household and child care tasks. Their congruency of outlook can be seen illustrated in their art work. They do have different standards for task responsibility, and Dave acquiesces to Melanie's standards most of the time, yet feels free to differ if he needs to do so. Both spouses agree that Melanie is the planner for the family, and she takes care of organizing most family activities and tasks.

Family tasks are divided in part along traditional gender lines: she takes care of things in the house and he takes care of things outside. However, in a departure from traditional patterns, Dave
cleans house and cares for their children.
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