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Amelia Fern Hube  
Couples' Decision-Making  
Processes: First-time  
Parenthood in Dual-Career  
Partnerships

## ABSTRACT

Dual-career couples are increasingly becoming the norm in society, and for these couples experiencing first-time parenthood, having been raised in a world of stay-at-home mothers and breadwinning dads, the decisions for how to manage childcare and career choices can be challenging. This qualitative study was undertaken to explore the question, "What are the experiences of couples in dual-career partnerships as they approach the birth of a first child?" Twelve partnered, first-time parents were asked a series of questions about their experiences with their partners, families and work environments as they navigated choices related to careers and childcare.

Participant narratives revealed the decision-making process for managing careers and childcare in first-time parenthood was shaped by gender role expectations of oneself and others, ability to communicate one's own needs and levels of discussion within each couple, and the availability of good support systems in the form of friends, co-workers, family, institutional policies and supervisors' support for family life. Significant findings in the study include that all the participants except for one male reported struggles with gender role expectations and that all of the participants who were in academia reported significant struggle with balancing family and work life. Through responses of parents in the study on what they felt contributed to their satisfaction or what would have helped them to feel better throughout the process, recommendations and best practices are presented for clinical social workers and dual-career couples.

COUPLES' DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES:  
FIRST-TIME PARENTHOOD IN DUAL-CAREER PARTNERSHIPS

A project based upon an independent investigation,  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2007

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The structure of family and work life has changed significantly over the past forty years and continues to evolve as social structures enable women to become even more career-oriented: “The widespread entry of women into market work since the 1960s has challenged the presumption that women’s primary adult role is that of caretaker for the home and family” (Sayer, 2005, p. 285). Sayer (2005) continues, emphasizing trends that show a shift from men acting as primary breadwinners, creating a dynamic of dual-career or dual-earner partnerships between spouses. For dual-career couples, a decision making process must take place, consciously or unconsciously, as they approach parenthood. On a pragmatic level, “parenthood increases the demand for unpaid labor and may continue to be associated with specialized marital roles” (Sayer, 2005, p 289). These specialized marital roles continue to be informed by the traditional gender role expectations of man as breadwinner and woman as caregiver (Cooney et al, 1993). Thus for dual-career couples, the question of whether there will there be a primary childcare giver and how the couple will negotiate childcare with their careers becomes primary as they approach the birth of a first child. This qualitative study is designed to examine couples’ experiences of their communication with each other in the decision-making process as they approached the birth of a first child, and as a result, whether they feel satisfied with their decision.

Literature on the sociological history of dual-career marriages; impending parenthood choices as they relate to dual-career couples; power, gender, and communication in marriage; and the role of support systems in childcare choices will be reviewed. There has been significant research on the dual-career couple in general and on marital satisfaction in the transition to parenthood, but little has been explored in relation to the decision-making process itself. It is during this process that power dynamics, gender roles and expectations, career aspirations, and parental role expectations are discussed either directly or indirectly. For the purposes of this paper, the terms dual-career marriage, dual-career couple, or dual-career family may be used interchangeably and are here defined as a marital partnership of two career-oriented professionals. Gender role attitudes will also be discussed: "Gender role attitudes are generally conceived of as opinions and beliefs about the ways that family and work roles do and should differ based on sex" (Firestone et al, 1999, p.198; Harris and Firestone, 1998, p.239). Support systems are here defined as friends, families, coworkers, and employers or institutions that provide practical or emotional support for the dual-career couple in the new role of parents.

Clinical social workers frequently work with clients in transitions through the period approaching first-time parenthood as well as with clients reflecting on the choices they have had to make with regard to their careers and parenting. Whether working with couples or individuals in partnership, clinical social workers must be aware of the underlying power and gender role dynamics that may influence their clients' relationship choices. Further, the hope is that this study will reveal some ways that communication can best facilitate partners feeling respected and valued through the decisions they reach.



Lastly, the men and women that are undergoing these decision making processes in our evolving social environment may benefit from some insight into what is working and not working for couples who have already undergone the process.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This study will first review relevant literature, including an examination of the history of women in paid work and the emergence of dual-career marriages, trends in dual-career couples' parenthood and childcare choices, evolving gender role attitudes and expectations, latent power dynamics in marriage, and the role of support systems on childcare choices. Examining the history of women's involvement in paid employment and unpaid labor gives some indication of how fresh a phenomenon this dual-career dynamic is between partners. The factors that influence dual-career couples' parenthood and childcare choices emphasize the significance of the challenge this presents to partnerships currently. The challenges men and women face as they no longer necessarily subscribed to pre-defined societal notions about which partner should be breadwinner vs. caregiver are still inevitably influenced by gender role expectations. So an examination of the evolving nature of gender role expectations is relevant. Unconsciously or consciously adhering to gender role expectations is influenced by and influences the latent power dynamics in marriage. Finally, a review of the role of support systems on childcare choices takes into consideration the support or lack of support in the social and work environments of dual-career couples that could have significant influence on what options for parenthood or the childcare and career interface exist.

### *Women In Paid Work And The Emergence Of Dual-Career Marriages*

The notion of dual-career marriages is a relatively new concept in western culture, considering that women have only been in the workforce in any significant numbers since the 1960s (Gutek, 2001; Sayer, 2005; Winslow, 2005). Lotchin (2007) reports that there was a small but inconsistent surge in women workers during WWII, increasing the “female portion of the workforce from 27 percent to 37 percent” (p. 179). This trend of women consistently engaging in paid work has continued to move from the exception to the norm in society (Reading and Amatea, 1986; Sayer, 2005). In a comparison of two reviews of literature twenty years apart, Gutek (2001) revealed, “In 1978, about 40% of women over age 16 were engaged in paid employment, either full time or part time....[whereas in 2000], about 60% of women over age 16 were employed full or part time” (p. 380). Due to differing societal rules and the ongoing need to challenge social structures through civil rights efforts, the rate of employment for women across racial groups in the United States is not uniform. Gutek (2001) goes on to differentiate 1995 census statistics for the employment percentage rates of White, Black and Hispanic women as “61.6% for White women, 59.0% for Black women, and 53.3% for Hispanic women” (p. 380). While employment rates have steadily risen for women since the 1960s and women have transformed some notions of women’s roles in work and family life, little time has passed since the pervasiveness of the very strict woman-as-mother role.

The dual-career partnership is a recent social manifestation and understanding its challenges is a current and evolving process (Gutek, 2001; Sayer, 2005; Winslow, 2005). Dual-career couples approaching impending parenthood face the challenge of balancing career-roles with parental-roles. The increasing prevalence of the dual-career partnership

has led to new trends in how couples in those partnerships choose to manage parenthood and careers.

*Trends in Dual-Career Couples' Parenthood and Childcare Choices*

The transition to parenthood for career-oriented couples has been widely shown to cause substantial challenges in managing multiple role commitments (Reading and Amatea, 1986; Cooney, 1993; Belsky, 1985). Reading and Amatea's study (1986) on groups of married graduate-student women and variables of career, marital, and family-role salience; parenthood motivations; and childhood paternal and maternal relationships suggests that "...today's childless women may have chosen not to have children as a way to minimize the stress of multiple role commitments and to maximize the rewards of proven areas of competence" (p. 256). In Orenstein's book (2000), she reports on a woman who had informally interviewed female executives in New York over a six month period about their career choices and was disheartened; the woman concluded that "...sure, she could 'be anything'—she could pursue the same opportunities as men—as long as she didn't have children" (p. 33). In other words, for some women, the challenge of balancing a career-role with a maternal-role is discouraging enough to avoid the option of parenthood completely (Reading and Amatea, 1986).

Alternately, delayed parenthood has emerged as a trend, in part to deal with the fact that early career development is a major obstacle for couples facing parenting (Casademont, 2005). Orenstein (2000) reports that of the hundreds of women she interviewed, "nearly all the young women I spoke with believed that having a child 'too soon' would be a disaster: It would cut short their quest for identity and destroy their career prospects" (p. 33). Once early career development is more established, emotional

energy seems to be freed up for the task of shared parental tasks (Cooney, Pedersen, Indelicato, and Palkovitz, 1993). Cooney et al., (1993) indicate that attaining success in masculine role assignments could free up men to explore “role diversification” and greater parental nurturing (p. 214). Navigating norms of gendered role assignments seems to be alleviated by choices to delay parenting. Balancing work life and family life frequently has been linked to marital stress. Belsky, Perry-Jenkins, and Crouter’s study (1985) emphasizes that work stresses influence marital communication and satisfaction, and that the inverse is true with family life influencing work life. The study suggests that high job satisfaction in general could enable a greater ease in negotiating the challenges of having a first child (p. 218), and certainly meeting early career development needs before entering parenthood could contribute to both job satisfaction and energy to devote to the parental role.

The multiple role commitments that men and women in dual career partnerships face can be stressful enough for some individuals to delay or even avoid parenthood entirely. The move toward this increasingly common phenomenon of facing multiple roles has occurred largely due to evolving gender role attitudes and expectations.

#### *Evolving Gender Role Attitudes and Expectations*

Women and men choosing to place value on family and career for both individuals are still pioneers in the transformation of societal norms and gender role expectations. One manifestation of gender role expectations in partnerships is revealed through allocation of unpaid labor in the home. Divisions have long been identified in allocation of unpaid labor between men and women in partnerships. Sayer’s (2005) article reviews empirical data to see if the relationship between time use and gender has

changed by comparing studies in 1965, 1975, and 1998. Sayer (2005) found that “Women continue to do more unpaid work – and less paid work – than men. Nonetheless, gender differences in paid and unpaid work time narrowed substantially between 1965 and 1998 (p.296).

While there is some indication of movement toward greater equality in the allocation of unpaid labor in the home, there seems to be a continuation of concepts of male and female gender roles in choices that influence career-building. Orenstein (2000) states that

According to sociologist Anne Machung, who interviewed seniors on six college campuses about their expectations for career and family, young women and young men typically perceive their career paths differently. Machung found that men for the most part, considered work as a way to earn money....Women, meanwhile, saw work more as a vehicle of personal satisfaction (p. 18).

These different perceptions of career path goals lead men to choose jobs that could enable them to be a “provider,” while women “assumed that they would move in and out of the workforce and that family responsibilities would limit both their advancement and earning potential—but not their husbands” (Orenstein, 2000, p.19). Orenstein (2000) states that the career women she interviewed “believe that it is their role to make personal sacrifices for their families despite the fact that men want children just as much” (p. 38). The researcher goes on the report, “Despite their contemporary career ambitions, for most women I talk to, traditional motherhood—in which they are the primary caretaker—remained central to their core conception of self” (p. 38-39). Orenstein (2000) argues that young women are making decisions early on that “virtually assure that their careers would be secondary to men’s and that their incomes would be lower” (p. 19).

Specific to parenthood, percentages of how married men and women with children divide their responsibilities as compared to those patterns throughout the past 40 years indicate that the division of labor has become significantly more egalitarian, yet still unequal (Sayer, 2005). The researcher found that “Parenthood continues to be associated with more specialized time allocation: mothers’ paid work time is 60 percent that of fathers (compared to 80 percent among all women) and fathers unpaid work time is 60 percent that of mothers (also 60 percent among all men...)” (Sayer, 2005, p. 297). Notions of women-as-caregivers are still embedded in societal and individual expectations of marriage and parenting, so that the dual-career couple is grappling with gender role expectations as well (Sayer, 2005). In fact, attaining the ideal of what Orenstein (2000) calls the “Good Mother” has new pitfalls (Orenstein, 2000; Sayer, 2005). “Mothers are expected to be experts in the needs and desires of their children, not to mention the latest child development methods...” (Sayer, 2005, p. 297). Men must also struggle with competing expectations to be breadwinners and good fathers. Roxburgh (1999) found that “Changes in norms regarding fatherhood, such as expectations of high father involvement coupled with the socialization that makes high work commitment very salient for men’s identity, are creating higher work-home conflict among fathers...” (p.784). Changing gender role attitudes are causing shifts in expectations of what good mothering or fathering means. Sayer (2005) found that

The sweeping changes that have occurred over past decades in American families have been accompanied by new conceptualizations of mothering and fathering. Yet, emerging norms calling for more equitable sharing of paid and unpaid work between women and men are in tension with enduring normative ideals about mothering and fathering based fundamentally on gender differentiated time use patterns (p. 297).

Further exacerbating this tension are the inadequate institutional policies for enabling a balance of work and parenting responsibilities for career-oriented men and women. Sayer (2005) states that

Societal values and norms...limit the ability of women and men to autonomously determine how they will spend their time. In particular, parents are constrained by norms of parenting and the lack of adequate institutional policies designed to facilitate and enhance a more equitable gender division of labor (p. 297).

Gender role attitudes and expectations have historically determined division of labor related to career and childcare choices for couples; they continue to influence contemporary choices. As decisions about whose career will be sacrificed, how decisions or compromises are made and who feels they have compromised more, or if roles are considered from a perspective of gender role awareness, power dynamics come into play.

#### *Latent Power Dynamics In Marriage*

In the hierarchy of family authority, the pinnacle of power in marriage was historically presumed to be a male-ordained right, while Tannen (1994) asserts that “our primary images of female authority come from motherhood” (p. 161). Yet with the evolution of women’s rights and feminist perspectives in more mainstream culture, marriages are becoming the theater for working for more egalitarian roles. As previously described, labor division in the family is only gradually becoming a less gender-determined allocation. The comfort of each partner to assert his or her power in the relationship is influenced by historical perspectives on who should have the right to assert their power. In Sexton and Perlman’s article (1989) the idea of *exchange theories of marriage* is described as marriage maintained by a “balanced exchange of resources controlled by each partner and needed by the other” (p. 933). The article investigated



whether “perceived equity in the exchange of marital resources” and whether differences in wives gender role orientation were predictors of differing marital power among spouses (p. 941). From this standpoint, individual’s perceptions of their own gender role orientation could impact notions of marital power.

For the women in Reading and Amatea’s study (1986) on groups of married graduate-student women, motherhood was not perceived as an arena to obtain personal reward or recognition. The article suggests that childless married women find the idea of career and childless marriage as the best option for personal reward and recognition, implying that motherhood is not seen as an avenue for personal reward and recognition (Reading and Amatea, 1986). It is no wonder that in a culture that values professional success so highly, that the role of parenthood would reap less personal reward or recognition. And so it easily follows, that since parenthood is not as highly valued as professionalism and childcare is traditionally a woman’s role, that women who seek to be valued and have power equity in the larger society would not easily choose such a female and undervalued role.

Alternately, Orenstein (2000) asserts, “Micromanaging family life makes women feel in control, makes them feel like Good Mothers. It’s also a very real source of power in a world where women can still feel powerless” (p. 286). Sayer (2005) supports, stating that in part due to the fact that women continue to be engaged in work that pays less than men and often offers little recognition, “mothering remains a potent source of self-identity, satisfaction and autonomy and, consequently, some women may be reluctant to relinquish ‘family’ power and authority in exchange for equal sharing of housework and child care with men” (p. 297-298).

Some couples have sought to circumvent these power dynamics by engaging in what Risman and Johnson-Sumerford (1998) termed “postgender marriages.” Risman and Johnson-Sumerford’s article (1998) reviews the findings of research on fifteen married couples who qualify as “postgender couples” by the study’s criteria: “in the negotiation of marital roles and responsibilities, they have moved beyond using gender as their guidepost” (p. 24). All of the couples were parents. The authors delineate between other models of “egalitarian marriages,” including “peer marriages” and the sample group of this study in postgender marriages. The study revealed a negotiation process that had to regularly take place for these couples to decouple “breadwinning from masculinity and nurturing from notions of femininity” (Risman and Johnson-Sumerford, 1998, p. 24). How these couples manage power dynamics is revealed by their division of labor, differences in control in the relationship, and by measuring cathexis (as defined by the management of emotion in the relationships). Control in the relationship was perceived by elements of manifest, latent, and invisible power. The researchers were unable to identify that either partner was exerting greater control or power over the other, and in general their conflicts were characterized by mutual effort at accommodation rather than about winning or losing (Risman and Johnson-Sumerford, 1998, p. 34). These postgender marriages are still the exception rather than the rule, but as women and men continue to face a lessening societal reliance on gendered role assignment, postgender marriages provide an insight into the importance of the decision-making process that must take place to successfully navigate gender and power dynamics.

Many factors influence men and women’s experiences of the latent power dynamics in their partnerships. As dual-earner couples face decisions around childcare,

gender role attitudes and latent power dynamics will inevitably influence their decisions, but support systems in their lives may play a pragmatic and equally important role in their decision making process.

### *The Role Of Support Systems In Childcare Choices*

The challenges that dual-career couples face in negotiating decisions on how to deal with childcare and their careers can either be ameliorated or exacerbated by the presence or lack of support systems respectively. Support can come in the form of tangible or emotional support from spouses or partners, family, friends, and organizations or institutional structures (Lee and Duxbury, 2001). Parents who feel supported by their environments are likely to benefit from the task of taking on multiple roles, while parents who do not receive support from spouses or partners, family, friends or organizations are more likely to feel overburdened by the challenge of balancing work and family responsibilities (Lee and Duxbury, 2001).

#### *Spousal Support*

Receiving support from one's spouse or partner is likely to be important for couples in the transition to parenthood, and communication styles affect that support (Curran et al, 2006). Curran, et al (2006) uses the term "*emotional attunement* to describe the communication style of couples who tend to have stable and happy marriages" (p. 477). The researchers go on to describe that "emotionally attuned couples show awareness of each other's perspective, listen and respond to each other's needs, and talk about the future as a couple" (Curran et al, 2006, p. 477). Among spouses, traditional gender roles are still evident in types of support given, with women reporting "instrumental support" such as household chores from their husbands and men reporting

receiving emotional support from their wives (Lee and Duxbury, 2001). Thus this gendered behavior could present a challenge to couples' emotional attunement.

### *Family, Social, and Work Support*

Couples' emotional attunement also seems to be affected by their experiences of their parents' marriages. The research study by Curran et al (2006) suggests that

...adults who insightfully recall disharmonious interactions from their parents' marriage are better able to anticipate marital difficulties and are more motivated to increase efforts to maintain emotional attunement so marital problems do not escalate. These adults were able to break the cycle of negative intergenerational patterns during a stressful time in their own marriage, the transition to parenthood (p. 483).

New parents' perceptions of their parents' marriages and what those experiences taught them to anticipate from marriage and parenthood may influence their ability to utilize their support systems to their fullest. To date there has been very little research on the prevalence of family support in the form of informal or complementary childcare, which Wheelock and Jones (2002) defined "as being when relatives, friends or neighbours look after children while their parents are working, studying or training" (p. 444).

Most parents, male and female, have friends with whom they can share their family and work concerns, though women report having disproportionately more friends than men and report relying on these friends for emotional support (Lee and Duxbury, 2001). Parents of both genders seek a range of support types from organizations or institutional systems, including: flexible and supportive workplace and supervisors, access to adequate and affordable childcare, and programs that provide paternity leave (Lee and Duxbury, 2001). Sayer (2005) projects, "further movement by men into unpaid work and women into paid work – particularly among parents – is also unlikely without

shifts in institutional constraints” (p. 298). She goes on to emphasize how current institutional structures exacerbate traditional gender roles in childcare and breadwinning. “The lack of adequate work-family policies and gender inequality in employment mean that many women and men instead ‘choose’ full-time employment for men and part-time employment for women” (Sayer, 2005, p. 298). Access to support systems such as the ones described above could drastically change the ease with which dual-career couples can undertake the task of equally sharing childcare and career tasks.

### *Summary*

Social acceptance of women into the workforce in large numbers since the 1960s has led to a shift in the nature of family life. Dual-earner partnerships are normative today, and men and women in dual-earner relationships face new challenges in balancing their careers and childcare (Reading and Amatea, 1986; Sayer, 2005). The prevalence of dual-earner partnerships causes couples to manage a “complex configuration of roles as workers, parents, and partners” (Roxburgh, 1999, p. 771-772). The challenges of managing multiple roles has even led to trends in choices to delay or avoid parenthood altogether. For career-oriented men and women who choose to balance career and parenting roles for both partners, gender role attitudes and latent power dynamics consciously or unconsciously influence their choices for how to do that. Risman & Johnson-Sumerford (1998) state that “Gender norms, gendered selves, and the tacit rules for male-female interaction are hidden forms of power in marriage” (p. 33). These power dynamics are confusing and challenging to navigate as society’s and individual’s expectations of gender norms evolve. Finally, while attitudes and expectations for how to manage childcare and career are significant for couples, the presence or absence of

support systems can influence choices that are available or appealing to dual-career couples.

There exists significant research on dual-career partnerships, gender role attitudes, power dynamics in marriage, and support systems for parents. There remains a lack of significant research on the decision making process that couples undergo to decide how to manage the multiple roles they face as parents, partners and professionals. This study seeks to explore the experiences of dual-career couples who navigated the decisions around careers and childcare before the birth of their first child.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate the experiences of individuals in dual-career partnerships who undertook a decision making process for how to balance career and childcare with their partners as they approached the birth of their first child. Conversations were with parents of 6-24 month old children. The major research question being addressed was: What are the experiences of couples in dual-career partnerships as they approach the birth of a first child and negotiate decisions around how to balance careers and childcare together? This project explored what arrangements parents came to in balancing careers and childcare, how they came to the arrangements they have, how they felt about the arrangements they have, and what worked well and poorly for them through the process. Questions included in the interviews explored participants' satisfaction with the decision making process that took place or lack thereof, levels of conflict in the relationship, gender roles and division of labor, and levels of support from others. The project specifically focused on what first-time parents found to work well for them to manage these decisions with their partners and what they felt would have worked to make the process easier and better for them.

This study utilized a qualitative, exploratory, and flexible research design method to explore and provide a rich description of the experiences of the participants. Anastas (1999) states, "Often the focus of flexible method study such as the psychological meaning of an event to a respondent is such that, by definition, it could only be captured

in the respondent's own words" (p. 353). Flexible research design is also particularly useful for studies that seek to explore some phenomenon that has received little previous study (Anastas, 1999). While much research has been done on childcare and career choices in dual-career partnerships, there is a paucity of research on the decision making process itself. This study, as a result, could be instructive to clinicians in the field and to couples anticipating or experiencing early parenthood.

This flexible design research study utilized semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to gather narrative data from the participants. The semi-structured interview outline included twenty-four standard questions for all participants (seventeen open-ended questions and seven demographic questions) and some optional follow-up questions to gain more detailed responses, such as "What contributed to feeling your wants and needs were adequately considered?" or "What would have helped in the process?" The open-ended nature of the interview questions allowed for an understanding of how couples experience their decision-making process and elicited their perceptions of what may have helped them to feel more satisfied with the process.

### *Sample*

The sample obtained for this study consisted of 12 individuals in dual-career partnerships who lived with their partner and had recently gone through the birth of a first child who was between 6 and 24 months of age at the time of the interviews. Both individuals in the partnerships were interviewed, and the interviews were conducted separately, so that 12 interviews were undertaken but only 6 couples were involved in the study. Participants were chosen within these parameters because they were considered to be experienced in the challenges the study topic aims to explore. The decision to focus on



parents of only one child between the ages of 6 and 24 months was made for several reasons. First, a second child introduces new and different challenges to balancing career and parenthood for couples. Next, parents of a child younger than 6 months are anticipated to be overwhelmed and more likely conforming to traditional gender expectations with the mother at home and acting as primary caregiver during the most significant breastfeeding months and postpartum recovery period. This population may be more difficult to schedule an interview with also. The decision to select parents of children up to 24 months was because after two years, their recollection of the decision making process and the significance of the issue to the partnerships may begin to fade. Finally, the decision to limit the sample to individuals cohabitating with their partners was made to explore how the two individuals are balancing the childcare and career decisions together, and the researcher anticipated that active involvement in work and family would be most evident in families who live together. Each individual was interviewed separately to ensure honest responses about their partnership dynamics.

The sample was not limited to individuals who identify having experienced a decision making process initially. It was anticipated that some participants would not have gone through a conscious negotiation process with their partners, while others would have undergone an explicit decision making process that greatly influenced their decisions. This researcher chose to allow for the possibility of this variable in order to reveal perceptions of what factors influenced the nature of this process for couples as implicit and intuitive or explicit. The study researcher anticipated that the participants, regardless of the nature of this process or the nature of their career and childhood choices,

would identify gender role attitudes and expectations, social supports, and power dynamics as aspects that influenced their decisions.

The nonprobability sample was one of convenience, meaning the research participants were “chosen primarily because they meet the selection criteria and they are easily available” (Anastas, 1999, p. 286). All of the participants in the study resided in one of three medium sized towns in North Carolina: Raleigh, Durham, or Chapel Hill, which are all within a reasonable distance from the researcher’s place of residence. The sampling method was also purposive, as the sample was “selected not to approximate representativeness but because the respondents are atypical in some way that specially equips them to be useful as study informants” (Anastas, 1999, p. 288). A snowball sampling strategy was employed to gather a group of individuals who fit the study parameters, who then referred other individuals with the proposed criteria. Anastas (1999) notes the benefits of some nonprobability samples in flexible methods based on the importance of understanding thoroughly a complex phenomenon, but that “a sample large enough to be representative is impossible to work with simply because of the volume of data that would be generated” (p. 285). The use of smaller samples still can offer large volumes of rich data, though they are not always representative or generalizable (Anastas, 1999).

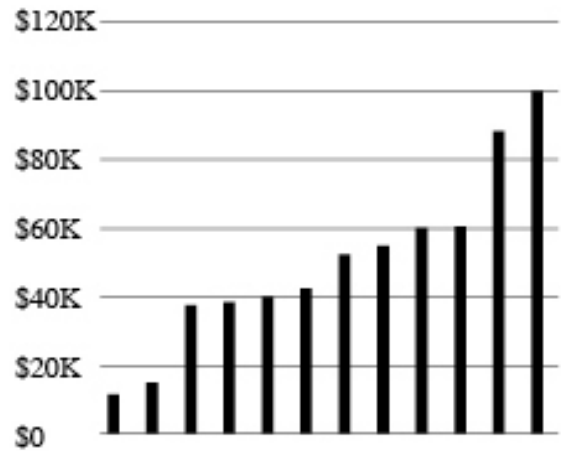
Interviews took place from November through December of 2006. Efforts were made to include a diverse population, including diversity of race, religion, socioeconomic levels, sexual orientation, and gender, but the sample consisted of individuals with some homogeneous traits, namely race, sexual orientation, and to some extent, occupation.

All of the participants in this study self-reported as white, though two participants were Canadian (grew up in Canada) and one was German (grew up in Germany). All of the participants were in heterosexual partnerships and self-reported as heterosexual, though one male participant took a long time answering this question, as if uncertain what he would answer. All but one of the couples interviewed were married, and all couples were living with their partner. The babies of the parents interviewed ranged in age from 6 months to 17 months. Parents' ages ranged from 25 to 42, with male partners ranging from 25 to 42 and women partners ranging from 25 to 34. The median age for parents was 32; average age was 31.75. Ten out of twelve participants (83%) self-identified as having a religious affiliation: two Episcopal, non-practicing (17%); one Lutheran (8%); two Roman Catholic (17%); two Catholic (17%); one Protestant (8%); one Presbyterian (8%); and one Southern Baptist, non-practicing (8%). Three of the six couples (50%) had both partners reporting the same religious affiliation (either reporting having one or having none). Though no questions were asked about participants' levels of education, based on their professions, a majority of the participants must have had graduate degrees. The approximate annual salary of the participants ranged from \$12,000 - \$100,000 (with the range as \$12,000 - \$88,000 for women, and \$37,000 - \$100,000 for men). The average annual salary for the participants was \$49,958. Table 1 and Figure 1 below show the occupations and income of the participants respectively.

**Table 1: Occupations of Participants**

Chemist, Principle Investigator
Landscape Architect
Masters Student (Religious Studies); Mom
Mechanical Engineer
Post-doctoral fellow studying biochemistry
Research Engineer
Research Scholar, Chemist
Research Scientist
Research Scientist/Teacher
Teacher, 8th grade
Writer
Writer/Journalist

**Figure 1: Income of Participants**



*Sampling Procedures*

The subjects were recruited through several strategies. First, sample was recruited by advertising in the following locations: posted signs or mailed advertisements to day care centers, announcements in libraries and fitness centers, posted ads on grocery store bulletin boards, ads on local community and university group listservs, and ads in selected local churches. Second, a snowball sampling procedure was utilized, so that respondents in the study suggested other potential interviewees from their social networks. Respondents to either advertisements or the snowball sampling procedure called the number provided, which was a private line set up just for this study, or used the email address provided, which is also arranged solely for this study. These respondents left a message through one of these means, then were phoned in return and asked if they were “partnered, living with their partner, and have recently gone through the birth of a first (and only) child who is now between 6 and 24 months of age.” Respondents were

also asked if their partner would also be willing to participate. Those who responded “yes” were scheduled for an interview and were asked to have their partner call to schedule an interview for him/herself. A few couples contacted the researcher and responded “yes” to all of the screening questions but had scheduling difficulties that led to them withdrawing their interest in the study. All of the couples that were screened responded “yes” to all of the screening questions, though several additional respondents did not reply to follow up contact from the researcher to obtain answers to the screening questions, thus were not included in this study.

#### *Ethics and Safeguards*

Rights of human subjects were ensured by use of a consent form (see Appendix A). Information obtained from participants in this study was coded so as to protect their privacy and confidentiality. Confidentiality will also be maintained in any publications that may result from this research. Since this study asked that participants share personal experiences of interactions with their partners that may have been or be challenging and their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with those experiences, there was the potential for this study to lead to some emotional discomfort, mild depression, or relationship conflict. Names of local licensed clinical social workers and psychologists that are available to offer individual or couple’s therapy were provided to participants in the event that the study leads to problems for the participant. The Human Subjects Review Board reviewed a submission of this study proposal for consent procedures and other ethical issues, consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics and Smith College’s obligations under Federal research regulation.

### *Data Collection*

In this study, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were the primary data collection method used. This method enables subjects to thoroughly explore and express their thoughts and feelings about an experience that is not static in nature.

The data was collected in a mutually agreed upon, neutral, and private area to ensure confidentiality. The interviews were carried out in conference rooms with few distractions or potential interruptions that were safe spaces for both participant and researcher in public buildings. The interviews ranged from approximately twenty minutes to one hour in duration and were audio recorded and later transcribed onto a computer. According to Anastas (1999), one of the strengths of narrative data is that it can be viewed “as a relatively natural one arising from the act of conversation or observation rather than from a schematic overtly imposed on them for the research” (p. 414). Additionally, the process of recoding is important to consider due to the rich material that emerges. Tape recording allows for “rapid, nonsequential access to the data” (Anastas, 1999, p. 416), however the emotional tones can be lost in the transcription of the recorded material. In this type of data collection, it is also important for the researcher to pay careful attention to the concepts of reliability and validity. Although these ideas are often difficult to conceptualize in flexible methods, it is crucial for the researcher to maintain a spirit of skepticism and self-awareness in the analysis of the narrative data (Anastas, 1999). To ensure reliability in the coding of narrative data in the study, the researcher had a second reader to check the researcher’s interpretation of the data. Validity in the study was ensured in part by the researcher’s decision to interview each individual separately to get two independent descriptions of the process that went on within a couple.

The interview questions (Appendix B) asked participants how they have balanced careers and childcare, how they came to their arrangement, what factors influenced their decisions, whether they felt that their wants and needs were considered in the process to reach their arrangement, if they felt satisfied with the arrangement they had, what contributed to satisfaction or what could have helped them to feel satisfied, and what, if any, changes took place from their original decision. The interview questions ended with brief demographic information. These interview questions were chosen to provide an opportunity for participants to share a narrative of their experience in the process they underwent with their partners.

#### *Data Analysis*

After the transcription of the interviews, the narrative data was organized conceptually, using content and thematic analysis. The process of content and thematic analysis was used to yield enriched descriptions of the experiences of dual-career couples in the decision-making process for balancing career and parenting based on participant's responses. Themes, the units of measure, were identified and labeled primarily based on language provided by the research participants, coding known as *in vivo*. Anastas (1999) indicates, "Content may also be relabeled by the researcher in terms connecting the content to theory or specific concepts, what Strauss, a sociologist, would term sociological codes" (p. 417). In some instances, the researcher constructed themes based on groups of terms and phrases used by the participants and based on theory and prior research. Anastas (1999) continues, "codes must be anchored clearly and illustrated repeatedly in the verbatim data from which they arise to tie them to the evidence from which they are derived" (p. 417). Themes presented in the findings chapter are supported

repeatedly by quotes from the verbatim data. The researcher made an effort to use as many coding categories as needed to capture the major ideas, however there were some limitations due to time parameters of this thesis project. The purpose of the data analysis was to develop a theoretical understanding of the various processes dual-career couples go through before parenthood to make arrangements for their careers and childcare, and if there are identifiable factors that make the process more satisfactory and better at meeting the individuals wants and needs adequately through this life transition.



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

This qualitative study explored the experiences of partnered, career-oriented, first-time parents as they navigated choices related to careers and childcare with their partners, families and work environments. Participant narratives revealed both the uniqueness of solutions that worked for couples and some common themes influencing satisfaction among partners with the arrangements they came to. Several hypotheses suggested themselves in the review of the literature, and the questions asked of participants were designed to illicit information on those hypotheses. Thus, the organizing principle of this findings chapter is based on the multiple hypotheses that emerged from previous research and this research process. In this chapter, the findings are divided into four sections: gender role expectations, discussion process, support systems, and serendipitous findings.

#### *Gender Role Expectations*

##### *Nursing Period Arrangements*

All of the women interviewed (100%) reported having made arrangements for maternity leave or to be on a break from work or school responsibilities after the birth of the child. Five of the six women interviewed (83%) reported taking between a few weeks of maternity leave up to nine months away from work; one woman planned to take leave but ended up attending graduate classes four days after the delivery. Though no questions were directly asked of participants about their nursing period, four out of the six couples (67%) referred to the time period and how it influenced their later childcare

arrangements. The two couples (33%) with neither member in the partnerships reporting about the nursing period were the couples with the female partner home doing childcare fulltime. Of the four couples who reported about the nursing period, all four (100%) identified the initial nursing period as contributing to making the care giving roles unequal, due to “biology” or “natural” reasons: “You know, obviously, when the baby was a newborn, my wife was the primary caregiver, just the basic facts of biology.”

### *Role Models*

Participants were asked, “How would you describe your role models for parenting or career building? How did your parents divide work and family responsibilities? How did your partner’s parents divide work and family responsibilities?” Some consistent messages about role models seemed to emerge from their responses: participants’ parents were primarily the role models identified; participants’ parents divided labor traditionally with the mother as childcare provider and homemaker and father as breadwinner, or the mothers did all of the work as single moms or with a noncontributing father-figure; and participants reported that they had few or no role models for two working parents. Ten of the twelve participants identified their parents as role models for parenting or career building, “Our parents were our role models.” Of the two who did not identify parents as primary role models, one described a family she had been a nanny for, while the other specifically stated that since her mom was a stay-at-home mom, her role models were people she knew who worked and had kids. Participants reported by far that their parents had traditional role divisions for childcare and breadwinning tasks, “Very, very traditional: you know, dad went to work, and mom cooked, cleaned, and watched the kids.” Three participants stated some variation on, “Basically, my mom does everything.”

So as research progressed, it seemed these dual-career couples had no role models for their approach to shared responsibilities, and many participants directly echoed this sentiment: “We’re just kind of making it up as we go.” “I think we had very few [role models].” “ I sort of feel like we’re off in space, figuring it out ourselves.” One participant stated, “I feel like there’s got to be people out there that are achieving this balance—we’ve seen some examples of it, though in [my] department there are few.” And another stated, “I don’t know that I really had kind of a good example of, where like, I thought, ‘Oh, wow. That really worked out for them; I want to do that,’ because, yeah, most everybody I knew, the parents stayed home.” Participants, as a whole, shared a lot in response to this question. While one participant described her parents as role models for parenting, she reported having no role models for career building, “[My mom] didn’t have a career outside of her children and her hobbies, and so, I didn’t really have a role model, like a female role model, and my father was never a role model for me.” She went on to identify herself as the first in her family to pursue a degree beyond undergraduate education.

Some participants continued on to explicate how they had encountered some professional role models that helped shape their careers. “[One professor at my university] is just one of the best teachers that I have ever had, he’s just such a great person—and he has an amazing family life too.” For participants who had role models who balanced healthy professional and family lives, these role models were highly influential. The husband in couple 6 reported,

There were some people in the faculty that seemed to balance life and career and family lifestyle.... so I would say, we looked to a couple of those people—those professors—and say, ‘Hey, they were successful. They were able to manage both

this intense career as well as family,' so a couple of those professors in the department of chemistry were influential, just in being able to see that cause especially science and a field like chemistry—to try to be a professor in academia is really tough. You have to work a lot; you've just got to devote yourself to it; you work a lot as a young professor trying to establish yourself. It's hard to do, and um, but to be able to see people be able to succeed at the highest level and to be able to manage the family balance is nice. It helped me stay in my career path, because I wasn't sure whether I wanted to stay in academia or not, and I could see that people live what I would call somewhat normal lives, and say, 'Ok, I'm going to keep going through this.'

His wife, who was in a PhD program before caring for their child and going into an industry job, also found that having a role model who balanced a successful career and family life was influential.

I think she just really opened my mind to it, and that you can customize it, and there's no right way to build your career and you just have to really make sure that you're taking care of your self. I think that just made it really real for me and easier for me to understand—that I don't have to be doing what I think I should be doing; that I need to do what I want to do. She was a really incredible role model.

One participant (in couple 4) identified that the role models he encountered in his chosen field of academia were actually causing him to seriously considered leaving that career track since it felt too challenging to balance family and work,

My current career trajectory is more academic or academia. Um, and I guess over the last year or two I've begun to question some of those role models, because I've begun to ask questions like, you know, it's a lot of work [laughs] and to try to do a tenure track thing and have a family and whatever else so I've been sort of reevaluating which role models I might want to emulate in terms of those things.

Four of the twelve participants in this study were building careers in academia. The significance of this factor on the generalizability of this study will be addressed in the discussion chapter.

### *Explicit Role Expectations*

Having parents as role models with traditional divisions of labor influenced some participants' expectations of parenthood, "So my expectations of motherhood were that the mother was very involved in the child's life." One male participant (in couple 5) spoke of how he felt about his and his wife's current arrangements and their role models and stated, "I kind of look at that and say, 'This is where we came from. This is what you were expecting.'" He went on to describe how rigid these role divisions seemed to feel to him,

But unless she's willing to go get a job that makes 30, 40 thousand dollars a year, then I can't just quit my job and do what I want to do with my daughter. And, so, in the mean time, they kind of have to be those roles, like our parents had when they were kids. Um, I'd love to change that, but unfortunately, it seems to be the way it is. I mean, I don't know how to change that.

His wife stated that she developed expectations of changing role divisions from the larger society, yet she maintained the expectation that she and her husband would perform traditional roles. In response to a question about what factors had influenced her arrangement with her husband, "His own expectations of raising a child: He did not, I don't think anywhere in his brain, have the idea that he'd be a stay at home dad for a young child. And then my expectations: I expected to be a stay at home mom." This same interviewee continued to identify expectations about evolving gender roles later in the interview.

I think I expected him to be nontraditional. Um, I don't know. From my friends' experiences I feel like I've gotten some reassurance that I'm not the only one—that a lot of us in our generation thought our husbands would have a lot more responsibility and came to find out, and didn't talk about it, you know, just kind of expected it, because we have heard that men are different now [laughs]—feminism or television, I don't know—something gave us the impression that men took more responsibility now. And some do, but the majority of us didn't—my

friends anyway, we didn't—it wasn't like we thought it was going to be, and my husband and I didn't talk about it, beyond the understanding that I was going to be the one at home.

There is an apparent contradiction in this particular interviewee's expectations for parenthood. This contradiction will be further addressed in the discussion chapter.

### *Unspoken Role Expectations*

Participants identified, on their own, expectations of role divisions and were also asked, “Were there unspoken expectations about how work commitments would change for each partner when the child was born? If so, what were they?” Unspoken expectations from a communication standpoint are addressed elsewhere in this findings chapter, but some unspoken expectations revealed gender role expectations. The husband in couple 5 reported some expectations about his marriage.

I guess in her case, the unspoken expectation was that because she was the student, and outside class time then she would arrange for [our child]. And in my case, it was, in the childcare, make enough money to pay for the childcare, and if you're not, get another job and fix it. And then, outside of that, it was, 'Be with [the baby] whenever you have an opportunity to do that.'

His statement seemed to imply a rigid gender role division in dealing with tasks that come up within their marriage. Gender role expectations were revealed in his and his wife's responses to a question about having compromised within the marriage since having a baby. His wife stated,

I feel like I definitely compromised more...at one point someone asked, said like, 'It's amazing how much your schedules change when, after the baby's born,' and my husband said, 'We haven't really found that to be the case,' and I said, 'Psha! For you!' [laughs] You know, and that's how different it was for him, cause his life didn't really change that much—he slept kind of generally normal except hearing a baby cry at night or having it next to him. Um, I think life didn't change very much for him: it changed completely for me.

To the same question, the husband responded,

I would say that we both compromised equally. I would rather be the primary care provider for my daughter. Uh, and probably, pre-marriage, we discussed it a little bit, and my suggestion to [my wife] was, 'Well first five, since you're not in a career right now, if you could handle the first five years, and then if you decided you wanted a career, have at it. I will take the next five, and we can do it as a trade.' But ah, I would tell you that she probably feels that she's compromised the most on this because she obviously has to make a lot of changes in schedule and stuff to be with [the baby] all the time, but if you take in the whole picture, I would say we compromise equally because I'm not getting to be with my daughter in her formative years.

His wife's response to the suggestion to each take five years of childcare came out in her own interview.

He always jokes that he wants to stay home with her, when she gets older. [laughs] Like of course she doesn't need anyone to take care of her when she gets older. He can be the soccer mom or something. But...he made it clear that he did not feel comfortable taking care of an infant.

For another couple (couple 3), who reported having little discussion about their needs before the baby was born, unspoken expectations were a current issue.

This is still sort of an ongoing discussion between us, but I think she had the expectation that she would, um, sort of back off from her career, more than she has been able to so far...and, um, and she would like to...uh... I think she would like to eventually work half time and be at home with [our baby] half the time, and I didn't really, I don't think we really actually talked about that before we had [our baby]. Or I didn't know she was so seriously interested in doing that.

At first, this quote may seem to indicate mainly that this couple has not communicated well enough, but as the husband goes on, gender role expectations around childcare and breadwinning become more explicit.

She got a good position here, and this wasn't my first choice of places, so this is just saying that her career, in my mind, has sort of already been placed ahead of mine. And so I thought that that would continue once we had a child, and it seems like she's interested in reversing our roles a little bit, with me becoming the, sort of, primary breadwinner, as you put it, and her becoming uh, more of a— spending more time parenting, I guess.

One mother (in couple 1) seemed to have an unspoken fear based on traditional gender role expectations that caused her to seek reassurance about the role divisions with her husband. “I just needed the reassurance that, you know, that I wasn’t going to be the primary childcare provider, even though I was feeding [the baby] every 2 hours and there was nothing anyone else could do to help that process.” From her perspective, her husband also seemed to be struggling with gendered role divisions. “I needed reassurance that this wasn’t forever, and he needed reassurance that I was enjoying it....Once we talked about that, and saw that that’s you know really, that as something that was going on, then I think we were both on the same page in terms of expectations.” She summed up the expectation that caused her to seek reassurance from her husband about her future in her profession, “So in terms of expectations, yes, I mean, right after [the birth], looking at it, it looked like I was going to completely lose my work life, and he was going to globe trot, and you know, write like the wind.” Other women in the study also reported concerns that they would be relegated to a mom-role and lose access to their professional lives, and one man had concerns over a loss of his professional competitiveness from not being able to be at work as much as he needed to be to progress in his career.

Another mother (in couple 6) identified an expectation that she felt, which was that she should have the home in order and dinner made sometimes. She identified this expectation as partly coming from her own expectations of her self (“I think sometimes I feel that [they are] expectations that I put on my self.”) and possibly from her husband, though she felt that he understood her more once he had stayed home himself. “And sometimes I feel like maybe he is wondering why, you know, I didn’t vacuum or like there’s clutter everywhere, but him staying at home for a couple of days when I was



interviewing [laughs]—I think he clues in now; cause he said around like, early afternoon, he was like, ‘Aw, man. When’s [my wife] coming home? This is hard.’ You know, so I think maybe at first he was kind of like, ‘Why? What does she do all day?’ But I think he understands that more now, having done it.” For this couple, it seems that having some experience of the other partner’s role helped reduce traditional gender role expectations. This same mother also reported that she had an expectation that she should receive some help from her husband upon his return to work to provide some relief from childcare. “I guess I expect him to sometimes when he comes home to just take [the baby] and just let me have my time.” When the individuals in this couple were asked if they felt that one partner had compromised more in the arrangement they came to, they responded very differently, with some possible implications for their internalized gender role expectations. The wife stated, “I think my idea of what compromise means has changed through this process, so I don’t think that we’re compromising anything really.” Her husband, on the other hand, reported that he felt his wife had compromised more than him.

I feel that [my wife] may have compromised a little more. Like, sometimes she would talk about it, and it would feel like, ‘Ok, I’m going in and I’m going to go get a post-doc and follow this kind of path,’ and she had, I don’t know, if you want to call it, like a hiccup in her career path. It’s not to say that having a baby is bad or anything, but like, in terms of her career, we felt that because she was going to stay at home, she wasn’t pursuing her career like right after her PhD, like I feel like she did compromise, like, her career path to be with [our baby] at home for a little while.

His response seems to imply some flexibility in his notions of what women and men’s roles should be.

Other expectations shared by the couples interviewed did not seem to be unspoken at all. Within couple 2, both partners stated that they expected both of them to work less and to have fewer traveling opportunities at their jobs. “We both knew that we’d have to work less than we were before.” Within a different partnership (couple 4), both individuals stated that they did not feel that they had any unspoken expectations, with the woman responding, “No,” and the male partner responding, “I can’t think of anything that was an unspoken expectation.” This partnership was unique in the focus the partners shared, spearheaded by the female partner, on equality in childcare providing, but their expectations at the outset were not the same.

I think we went with different expectations into this whole thing. I mean I kind of expected a very balanced approach, while—balance not also in the sense of who does the work but also who makes the decisions—and, cause those are two different things. And [my husband], from the beginning would do whatever the baby needs, but he kind of thought, the mother makes the decisions. So, because I think that’s how he was brought up. And in a way, that’s how I was brought up to, but my parents, I had a stay-at-home mom, so it was more natural that she was the expert in all things childcare. While in our situation, we both work, so I mean, I kind of expected that we would just share and come to democratic solutions and it took us some discussions to really get there, because in the beginning, [my husband] just expected, ‘Ok, you will decide. You’ll decide on,’ I mean, ok that I would decide on where to deliver is kind of natural, or I mean, that I have a bigger vote in that. But then whereas which pediatrician do we choose, so I mean we went both to the interview, but my husband kind of expected, ok, ‘you just have this final say.’ And so, we had to, we had to have several discussions where I pointed out, ‘Ok, I really would like to be equal partners in that.’ And, you know, I’m not sure we are really *there* [emphasis during interview] yet. I mean, I’m still the one who makes the pediatrician appointments, [laughs] so, yeah, but, I think we are on a good way. And I am not really disturbed by, I mean it’s not really a big deal if you make the appointments, and we both go with him to the appointments. But it’s kind of, I have the feeling, I still want him to have more the feeling that he’s an equal partner. You know, it’s less ‘who does the work,’ it’s more like, ok, ‘who has the power of the decisions?’

As she revealed, she still does not feel “*there yet.*” Her narrative seems to imply that even when partners are clear about their expectations and skilled at communication, that these gender role expectations are deeply ingrained in family and work life.

### *The Default Parent*

One finding related to unspoken (gender role) expectations that felt salient enough to be set apart was the notion of the default parent. Five out of twelve parents identified a dynamic with their partner (in two couples, both partners mentioned it, and one additional participant mentioned it) in which the female partner was the default parent when it came to decisions or childcare tasks.

I feel like it started out kind of equal, and then it happens where I was taking 10 weeks off and he returned to work, and then it’s like I started learning more about how to take care of the kid and then it became kind of like, whenever there were questions, it’s like I became the default.

As was presented in the beginning of this section, the nursing period effectively increases unequal childcare roles even when parents seek to practice equal caregiving. This same mother (of couple 3) stated,

And so I feel like even when you have the best of intentions to make it 50/50, there’s that set up, and the fact that he was breast-fed and still is, that I almost feel like it’s completely unrealistic for it to be 50/50 with a breastfed baby, even if you think it, I mean that’s my opinion, it’s just there’s no substitute for Mom in the really early years.

She gave a more specific example during her interview of how being the default parent played out in her marriage.

Like, if I, I feel like if I wanted to go to the mall, I would like really arrange it, like, ‘Would it be ok, if you could keep him for these hours?’ but if like my husband was going to the mall, he would just be like, he would mention it, ‘Is that ok?’ but like, it wouldn’t feel like he had to make sure the kid was taken care of before he could go.

She clarified that she felt this dynamic was created by both of them.

I mean it definitely wasn't one of our, his fault, because, you know, sometimes it would be like, he would be holding the baby and the baby's screaming, and I know what [the baby] wants, and so I'll be like, 'Oh wait,' you know. I set myself up to be default parent by like constantly jumping in.

Her husband's only reference to this dynamic was a statement that implied that his wife was in charge of delegating whatever needed to be done for childcare. "I could sort of schedule my work to a certain extent around when [my wife] needed me to do stuff." In this marriage, both partners identified the wife as the primary breadwinner and the primary childcare provider.

In the other couple where both partners identified the woman as the default parent (couple 5), the female partner identified the default parent role throughout her interview. "Everything that [the baby] needs, that's what my schedule is based around. And for my husband, his [schedule] isn't really dependent on, unless I say, 'I need you to take care of this particular thing that [the baby] needs,' then his schedule doesn't change." Later in the interview, she added, "That like, the father wasn't just going to *do* it automatically the way that a mother has to do it automatically." Just as in the couple above where the wife was the default parent, this participant stated that it was difficult to let her husband learn how to respond to the baby's needs. "When the baby was crying and crying and what [my husband] was doing wasn't working, it was very hard to let him do it his way." She reported that there was some change over time in this default parent dynamic, but her statement revealed that she was still primarily responsible for the baby. "I think now [my husband] is very responsive, he'll call babysitters, he'll arrange things, just only with my asking, so." One additional characteristic of this couple's identification of a default parent

was that, while the female partner felt she was the default decision maker and care giver, she also felt that she was not recognized by her husband as the “expert in the family” in that arena.

And that was hard, because I didn’t want to be the only one taking care of her, and I wanted him to be able to take care of him too, but he didn’t, but if he didn’t take my advice, like if he wasn’t around enough to see how she was changing, and he wouldn’t take seriously my advice, like that I was kind of the expert in the family—I was the one that was there, around her.

She also emphasized the ways in which the partner who is home with the baby more becomes more knowledgeable in how to respond to the baby’s needs.

And that’s really hard, because it takes a while, and he would not have a clue. You know, like he would be saying things that were, like, ‘Oh, you know maybe her diaper is,’ you know, kind of, like long after she had gotten past the stage of like crying about diapers, kind of the basic needs—when she was crying because she was upset, or was in a bad mood, like when she actually had emotional feelings. He only thought of her immediate needs; like he hadn’t been around enough to know that these were no longer the set of issues for her.

Her husband also supported the notion that she was the default parent in his interview when he stated that his role was to provide money for the family, “And then, outside of that, it was, ‘Be with [the baby] whenever you have an opportunity to do that.’” When asked about any conflict he and his wife had experienced, he responded, “Ah, so, she’s been good about it, but the conflict, she just kind of says, ‘look, I’m going to take care of this.’ If she says, ‘I need you to do this,’ then I’ll take care of it, but other than that, she just handles it. That’s been really nice.” In this marriage, both partners identified the wife as the primary childcare provider and the husband as the primary breadwinner.

One other participant who identified the default parent role was the female partner in the marriage (in couple 4) where the partners shared a unique commitment to equality

in childcare. As she stated in the long quote earlier in this section, her husband expected that “the mother makes the decisions.” She went on,

We both work, so I mean, I kind of expected that we would just share and come to democratic solutions and it took us some discussions to really get there, because in the beginning, [my husband] just expected, ‘Ok, you will decide. You’ll decide on...’ I mean, ok that I would decide on where to deliver is kind of natural, or I mean, that I have a bigger vote in that. But then whereas which pediatrician do we choose, so I mean we went both to the interview, but my husband kind of expected, ok, ‘you just have this final say.’

Her example emphasizes that for the parents who identified one parent as the default parent, their experience is that part of the responsibility that they are shouldering alone is not just the childcare tasks, but decisions about childcare as well.

#### *Actual Gender Role Divisions*

In order to explore in the discussion chapter the connection between the expectations of the couples who were interviewed and their actual role divisions, it is pertinent to share how couples reported on their role divisions. Most couples identified

Table 2: Participant Identification of a Primary Childcare Provider or Breadwinner within the Couple

<b>Couple</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Primary Childcare</b>	<b>Primary Breadwinner</b>	<b>Childcare &amp; household tasks</b>
<b>1</b>	Male	50/50	Male partner	Shared
<b>1</b>	Female	60% Female/40% Male	Male partner	Take turns
<b>2</b>	Female	Female partner	Male partner	Shared
<b>2</b>	Male	Female partner	Male partner	Shared
<b>3</b>	Female	Female partner	Female partner	Shared
<b>3</b>	Male	Female partner	Female partner	Shared
<b>4</b>	Female	Equal	Equal	Alternate
<b>4</b>	Male	Equal	Equal	Alternate
<b>5</b>	Female	Female partner	Male partner	Female partner
<b>5</b>	Male	Female partner	Male partner	Female partner
<b>6</b>	Female	Female partner	Male partner	Shared
<b>6</b>	Male	Female partner	Male partner (would change to Female partner within 1 month)	Shared

the male partner in their relationship as the breadwinner and the female partner as the childcare provider. When asked if there was a primary childcare provider or primary breadwinner, the parents reported as is shown in Table 2.

Nine out of twelve parents (75%) reported that the female partner was the primary childcare provider. Of these nine parents, seven parents (78%) reported that the childcare and household tasks (outside of primary care giving) were shared: two of the nine parents (22%) reported that the female partner took care of childcare and household duties without help from the male partner. Three of the nine parents (25%) reported that childcare was shared equally between the partners. While most couples agreed about their role divisions with regards to childcare, there was one discrepancy between answers within the same couple. Within one couple, the male partner reported equal sharing of childcare duties, while his wife reported that she took care of 60% of the childcare duties. Overall perceptions of childcare roles were mostly agreed upon.

Eight out of twelve parents (67%) identified the male partner as the primary breadwinner; two parents (17%) identified the female partner as the primary breadwinner; and two parents (17%) identified that they shared equally in breadwinning responsibilities. All parents agreed with their partner about their role divisions with regards to breadwinning. One out of six couples (17%) reported that, while the female partner was currently not providing income, she would become the primary breadwinner within the month. With this change in mind, all parents (100%) reported contributing to some portion of the household income.

### *Experiences of Gender Role Expectations*

Participants were also asked, “If your family/friends/co-workers were unsupportive [of your decisions with careers and childcare] in any way, how do you feel this may have to do with differences in gender role expectations?” All but one participant reported experiencing a lack of support for one or both partners in the couple apparently related to others having different gender role expectations than their own. The one participant (in couple 5) who reported no lack of support was a woman in the most traditional arrangement of those interviewed.

Friends, across the board, were described as supportive of the kinds of decisions the participants were making for work and childcare arrangements. Participants also reported feeling like friends would be supportive even if they made non-traditional choices with the male parent as caregiver. Parents of the participants and co-workers or supervisors, on the other hand, were more likely to be reported as being unsupportive of the participants’ choices.

Both members of two couples reported that family had been unsupportive of the wife’s choice to work, and that they felt this had to do with differences in gender role expectations. A female participant (in couple 6) reported, “Oh, definitely I feel like that with my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law. And I kind of worry that they’re going to think that I’m not a good mom because I want to do something else.” This same participant spoke of the “traditional” nature of her husband’s parents, and she shared a story: “Actually when we got married, his mom took me aside to give me advice, and she says, ‘You know, if the man says you don’t work, then you don’t work.’ So I politely smiled and nodded and knew I was going to do whatever I wanted anyway.” The issue of



his family's disapproval of her decision to work after a 9 month period of full-time caring for the baby also came up in her description of conflict between her and her husband. She went on, "I should try not to let it bother me, but I definitely feel like, because I'm the woman, I should stay home. Like, I said before, I think it's expected that if [my husband] said that I shouldn't work then that's what I have to do. And I think that falls into a gender role 100%."

Another female participant (in couple 4), who was German and whose parents still live in Germany, spoke of the influence of cultural factors on gender role expectations for her.

The only people unsupportive of our arrangement are my parents, and that's just cause they, I mean, they have different expectations, and they also have a different cultural background. I'm from Germany, and there, professional childcare for very young children is not very readily available. So in Germany, usually, women will stay home for the first three years, and that's supported by the social system there, so you have your job, for those three years, saved for you. Now, this is very different here. And so, the family-friendly leave in Germany is much more extensive, and that's what my parents know. So they have a very hard time understanding that we enrolled our child in a full time daycare when he was 11 weeks old. But so that's really the only criticism I ever got.

Her husband also reported this same issue when asked about the influence of differences in gender role expectations. This same mother reported that she had good work support by stating that her co-workers all had children with both parents working. She went on to say of her boss, "My boss is very supportive; he has three children of his, by himself, and he and his wife work full time." It seemed for her that support was directly related to having co-workers and a boss who were also dual-career parents. The possible implication this has for the importance of various institutional supports as well as role models will be addressed in the discussion chapter.

Seven out of the twelve participants identified co-workers or supervisors as unsupportive in relation to their parental status or childcare choices. Of these individuals, six identified differences in gender expectations as part of the lack of support they experienced. The seventh participant (male partner in couple 2) did not seem to understand what was meant by “differences in gender role expectations,” even when rephrased. In couple 1, both partners were writers and offered a unique comparison of experiences in their work environments; both participants reported on the same incidents as an example of gender role expectations. First the husband reported candidly about his work supports in general, and stated,

Work [supports]: non-existent, with the exception, and it only works with female editors, ‘I’m sorry I’m late, childcare didn’t show up, I’ve got [the baby] all day, I’ve had him all week.’ ‘Oh that’s so sweet. Don’t worry about it.’ It’s astonishing, it works every time. Um, only with female editors though, very weird.

Later, when asked directly about any lack of support having to do gender role expectations, he stated,

If we have any issue related to that question, it would be, well we have two: Me getting the break from the female editors when I suspect that [my wife] would not get that same break. Um, so there’s sort of a gender difference: when a guy can’t meet his deadline because he’s taking care of his year old son, that’s sweet: When a girl can’t, when a woman doesn’t do it, uh, she’s just not pulling her weight.

Then his wife reported with some sarcasm,

I’ve had a much harder time, oh, I mean, that’s hilarious. You know, if a man, [my husband] calls in with [the baby] squawking, and the fact checkers think it’s the cutest thing in the world, you know: I wouldn’t dare call my editor unless I knew [the baby] was, like, sound asleep. And, you know, my bosses are all women, and his bosses are men, and that’s a very interesting dynamic that maybe will never go away in our society, but you know. If a man is showing great dedication, it’s really seen as, um, a uh, a marvelous example of his being about to juggle things or his empathy or his whatever: And I feel like if women do that, it’s seen as a woman not taking her job seriously.

She addressed this again later in the interview—this feeling that bringing any awareness of her role as mother into her conversations with editors would mean she was not taking her job seriously. This was one of the blatant examples of gender role expectations being very different for men and women that were reported in participants' workplaces.

A male participant (in couple 5), a teacher, who was arguably in the relationship that was the most traditional in division of labor of those interviewed, reported a blatant example of what he termed "societal gender role expectations," to clearly distinguish from his personal gender role expectations:

My work support system has been *crap*. My boss, my principle told me—who had just had a baby, not a month before we did, but it was his second child—ah, said, I said, 'I want to take a week off from school, because my wife's going to have this baby, and then I want a week,' and he said, 'You're not having a baby.'

He stated about this incident, "Societally, the woman has the child and is expected to take care of the kids, so obviously, my boss was upholding those expectations and stereotypes of what gender roles are."

Another participant (in couple 2) reported with strong emotion about how she experienced her supervisor's lack of supportiveness as related to gender role expectations. She described how she had become pregnant "out of wedlock" and was pulled off of all of her projects after telling her boss. She stated,

And I don't know that I've done anything to offend him in any other way, besides the fact that he doesn't understand why anyone would want to have children, and he hates kids, and he just made it apparent that he doesn't ever want to see my daughter in the office, and that he doesn't approve of me having that baby. So I believe it does have a lot to do with gender roles.

She clarified later on her view of her boss's expectations: "And that gets thrown in my face all the time: If I want a career then the other person needs to stay home. And obviously, financially we can't afford that."

For one mother (in couple 3), lack of supportiveness at work seemed connected to being in a field with few women and being the only woman in the department with children. "I would get some feelings at my work sometimes that, like, I'm a bad mom because my kid goes to daycare. I'm the only female in my division with a kid. It's, well, I mean, I'm an engineer, so partly it's just mostly men, but there are women and they just don't have kids." She went on to tell of a specific instance of gendered expectations:

One guy did make a comment. It was kind of to the effect of like, 'If my kid was in a daycare, I was going to miss his milestones, like his first steps.' What a like ridiculously insensitive thing to say. And it's just kind of like, and my thought was, like, 'Well, I guess you're missing them then.' You know, I didn't say it, but, 'Because you're,' because somehow because he was the *man*, it wasn't weird that he was at work that day, but, and you know, his wife stays home. But, I don't know—somehow he felt a need to say something about it, because, you know, I was the woman, and I was working.

Her husband, in a post-doc, also reported that co-workers had been his only experience of people being unsupportive, and he experienced gender role expectations that worked against him as well. "I feel like my employer had a certain expectation for what my role would be and is surprised at the amount of time that I seem to be taking to be a parent. I think if I were a woman in this position that she would not be so surprised at that."

Couple 6, with both partners pursuing PhDs, reported on having met with very strong disapproval from the female partner's advisor once she announced her pregnancy. Interestingly, the advent of policies to increase the number of women in certain fields seemed to create more pressure on her in this situation. She rationalized her advisor's

behavior by stating, “I think part of it is that there’s a dearth of women in chemistry and science faculty...and so I think [my advisor’s] very concerned about his reputation and his appearance. And so I think the fact that I’m a woman, makes him want me to pursue academics more than if it was another man.” When her husband shared his perspective on the same situation, he reported that a male student advisee was also approaching parenthood and was not admonished for his change in status.

With [my wife’s] former advisor, with a coworker of hers being male, it seemed alright that he started a family and had a child, whereas she, like we started a family and all of a sudden, [her advisor] felt like, ‘Oh she’s going to have to stay home and take care of the baby and put her career on complete halt.’

The female partner in this couple gained her PhD before giving birth, and chose to take time away from her career track, she stated, in part due to the bad experience she had with her advisor.

I could have applied for positions earlier here; I didn’t apply for post-docs in academics here and one of the factors here was the bad experience with my PhD advisor. And I know that not everybody is like him or whatever, but it really—I’d like to think that it didn’t affect me that much, but it did—and so, that affected my decision to kind of, like, I was honestly too scared to apply for positions in academics.

### *Internal Conflicts*

Some participants also spoke of internal conflicts over their own expectations for themselves, that were based on gender. The female partner in couple 1 spoke directly of this, stating:

Part of it is a societal pressure: part of it is an internalized pressure. [laughter] You know, um. And those forces are going at you all the time. And they’re dormant, that’s the funny thing; they’re dormant all through our education and all through our early career. You know, we really think we’re going to be the generation that doesn’t have to deal with it. Then you have this baby and they just emerge: these feelings of, like, ‘Betty Crocker guilt,’ and all of this stuff, you know, you’re not, you didn’t even grow up believing these things; you didn’t, um,

you certainly don't have these expectations for your female friends....But then with yourself, you're much more, you revert into some sort of 1962 sensibility of feeling like you're supposed to take better, be more dedicated to your child or more dedicated to your home. So I think it's external pressures as well as an internal thing that maybe it makes you more sensitive to the appearance of that kind of criticism or the appearance of that kind of judgment.

Other mother's reported feeling that others' more traditional gender role expectations made them question themselves at times. The mother in couple 6 stated, "Do I feel like I'm not a good enough mom if I'm, you know, wanting to do something else?" But then the flip side to that is also like, I want to inspire my kids to want to make the world a better place, and I think the best way to do that is to be an example for them."

#### *Discussion Process*

Several questions were asked of participants that elicited responses about the discussion or communication process they may have undergone as they made arrangements for childcare and their careers as new parents. The questions asked included, "How did you and your partner come to that arrangement; what was the decision making process; were there unspoken expectations for how work commitments would change for each partner when the child was born? If so, what were they; do you feel that one partner compromised more to come to the arrangement you have? If so, can you explain; how do you feel that your wants and needs were adequately or inadequately considered in the process, and what contributed to this or what would have helped; how do you feel satisfied or unsatisfied with the decision that you came to; and if a change needed to take place from the original decision or arrangement, why did that need to take place?" Before addressing how couples came to the arrangements that they did, this section will report findings of what the participants' arrangements actually were.

### *Childcare and Career Arrangements*

Eight out of twelve parents (4 couples - 67%) identified having a paid childcare arrangement: two out of six couples (33%) used a daycare center fulltime; one couple (17%) used part-time in-home babysitters while they worked from home; and one couple (17%) used an independent childcare provider fulltime, who cared for her own children and two others in her own home. Of the four parents (two couples – 33%) who reported no paid childcare help, one couple (17%) reported that the female partner was full-time caregiver with no outside help, while the other couple (17%) reported that the female partner was the primary caregiver but would utilize a “care share” with another mother two days a week. Table 11 illustrates these participant characteristics among others.

All but two of the parents interviewed (83%) essentially worked full time. Of the two who did not work full time, both were women, one had just been hired to work full time two months down the line, and the other was a part-time graduate student who did not plan to work fulltime. Of the parents who worked (10), two worked from home, two worked in post-docs with some flexibility but working less than would have liked to without a child, one cut back to 75% at her position but still worked 40 hours a week, one taught in academics with some flexibility, three worked in fulltime industry or professional positions, and one taught middle school and extracurricular activities keeping him out of the house from early morning until evening.

### *Discussion and Communication of Needs*

Participants reported various kinds of discussion and communication as a means to coming to the arrangements they had. Two couples focused on discussion, not of what they could do or what they each needed, but where the child would go to daycare (the

assumption was made for both of them). The male partner in one of these two couples (couple 3) reported on the discussion of whether to have a child as the most significant for him. The couple that worked from home (couple 1) reported little discussion but that it just progressed “naturally” with an occasional in-home care provider. In the couple with the more traditional role divisions (couple 5), the woman reported talking some about what they would do but fell back on their traditional expectations of themselves, while the man reported some premarital discussion but that their arrangement just happened “out of necessity.” Only two couples emphasized the discussion process as a primary part of how their arrangements for their childcare and careers were made. Table 3 presents some of the quotes by participants that seemed to represent their approach to discussion of their childcare and career arrangements.

#### *Unspoken and Spoken Expectations*

Participants were also asked “Were there unspoken expectations for how work commitments would change for each partner when the child was born? If so, what were they?” This question was asked in acknowledgement that people must know their own expectations in order to communicate them well to their partner in a decision-making process. Responses to this question are shown in Table 4. The responses these participants gave to the question about unspoken expectations seemed to reveal volumes about the dynamics between themselves and their partners. Specifically, responses pointed to the areas in the relationship where assumptions and limited communication lay. Several participants reported no unspoken expectations, and these participants were generally those who reported the highest amount of discussion during their transition into parenthood.



Table 3: Participant Responses to the Question:  
 “How did you and your partner come to that arrangement?”

<i>Couple</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Quote*</i>
1	F	“Naturally. It really wasn’t a battle, um, or even really much of a discussion. I think we just both naturally want to spend as much time as possible with [the baby]. So, however we cram our work in around that, we do.”
1	M	“You know, it just sort of happened. The only part of the arrangement that we really had discussed to any depth was, uh, [my wife] getting more time to write.”
2	F	“We looked at several different options [for daycare].”
2	M	“I don’t know. Just kinda worked out.... We never really sat down and talked about it.... I guess the only real decision was, like who took her to daycare and picked her up. Just so we could both work longer hours if we need to. Other than that, things just sort of fell into place. There wasn’t any, really, decisions that we made.”
3	F	“We just kind of knew—I don’t know if it was something we specifically, but—that I was going to work. As soon as I was pregnant, we started looking at daycare.”
3	M	“I think it’s been going on for a few years now, since we moved here and have been talking about [having a child]. I guess, it was mostly a matter of talking about it—me being hesitant about it and her sort of pushing, and I don’t know, that just went on for about 3 years.”
4	F	“With discussions. I mean we just sat down and decided what would work best for us. We kind of change it on the go.”
4	M	“We discussed it a good bit beforehand, and we continue to discuss it and sort of as things come up we sort of handle them on an as-needed basis.... So there was just discussion of those things, and sort of continuing adjustment as is necessary.”
5**	F**	“We’re not good communicators. I don’t think there was much of a process. It was just kind of understood. I mean, we’ve talked about it, but not in any kind of like, and we haven’t really had arguments about it or anything either, it’s just kind of worked its way out.”
5	M	“We talked about it pre-marriage, but it kind of, kind of ended up being the way, by necessity, because I did have the gainful employment already.”
6	F	“I mean we talked about it, and, you know, about adjusting to me staying at home, when I’m used to ‘Go, go, go,’ research and that kind of thing, and you know, the challenges with that, and, ‘Do I want to go back to work?’ you know—it would change everyday what I wanted to do.”
6	M	“We talked a lot about it.”

\*These quotes represent only a portion of the participants’ whole response to the question.

\*\*She responded as such to the previous question: “What was the decision-making process?”—included here because it was more pertinent to the goal of this question. Her response to the question about how they came to their arrangement is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Participant Responses to the Question:  
 “Were there unspoken expectations for how work commitments would change for each partner when the child was born? If so, what were they?”

<i>Couple</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Quote*</i>
1	F	“Yes...if there was an unspoken expectation, it was, you know, ‘Golly, I hope he knows what he’s doing, because I don’t.’ And he was hoping I would know what I was doing.”
1	M	“I didn’t expect [my wife]’s work to take up as much time as it does.”
2	F	“I think [my partner’s] career wasn’t going to be advancing as quickly as he wanted it to...[And] when I took maternity leave, I was unable to do any traveling or that type of thing, so that also hurt a couple of my current projects.”
2	M	“Yep, we both knew that we’d have to work less than we were before.”
3	F	“[pause] I don’t know that we, it’s probably something we should have put a little more thought into. I think it was almost like, ‘Oh we’re just going to have a baby, and then we’re just going to, do our jobs.’ So. Yeah, I don’t know if I had ideas about how it would change.”
3	M	“I think there were. I think that...[my wife] had the expectation that she would, um, sort of back off from her career...I think she would like to eventually work half time and be at home with [the baby] half the time, and I didn’t really—I don’t think we really actually talked about that before we had [the baby]. Or I didn’t know she was so seriously interested in doing that. I also had an expectation that...I would work less too.”
4	F	“Um, no. Before we had [the baby] we discussed through how much maternity leave I would take, how we would do things between my maternity leave and start of the daycare and that worked our pretty well.”
4	M	“I can’t think of anything that was an unspoken expectation. I think we pretty much talked about—[my wife] probably had to pry them out of me, but [laughs]—um, yeah I don’t believe there were any unspoken expectations there.”
5**	F**	“I think it was kind of—we have a traditional household [laughs] by today’s standards. I think both of us grew up in traditional households. I think I expected him to be nontraditional... it wasn’t like [my friends and I] thought it was going to be, and my husband and I didn’t talk about it, beyond the understanding that I was going to be the one at home.”
5	M	“I guess in [my wife’s] case, the unspoken expectation was that because she was the student, and outside class time then she would arrange for [the baby]. And in my case, it was, in the childcare, make enough money to pay for the childcare, and if you’re not, get another job and fix it...And then, outside of that, it was, ‘Be with [the baby] whenever you have an opportunity to do that.’”
6	F	“I guess I expect him to sometimes when he comes home to just take [the baby] and just let me have my time, but that’s not really unspoken because I kind of speak my mind...I guess more of the unspoken expectations would be...sometimes I feel like he comes home...there’s stuff everywhere in the house, you know, I don’t have dinner made—you know, and I don’t think he expects me to have dinner for him everyday, but you know, I’d like to be able to do that....So I think sometimes I feel that—the expectations that I put on my self.”
6	M	“Unspoken expectations. Uh, I don’t think so. I don’t think there were.”

\*These quotes represent only a portion of the participants’ whole response to the question.

\*\*Her response to this question was, “Yeah, I think I’ve already talked about that,” so I included her earlier comments in this table.

## *Conflict*

Table 5 reveals extremely varied experiences of conflict in the relationships of those interviewed. For some couples unspoken expectations reported above had become sources of conflict. For others, any conflict was out in the open all along or related to their feelings about gender role expectations reported on in the section above.

Interestingly, the qualitative approach to this question allowed for the participants to describe the quality of the conflict, such as “silent conflict,” or “stressful” vs. “divisive” conflict.

A few quotes in Table 5 emphasize the role of communication in limiting conflict. For the female partner in couple 5, she found that when conflict arose with her husband, “It tends to then change his behavior—just expressing what I need.” The male spouse in couple 6 stated, “we knew we wanted, like we talked a lot about it; we knew we wanted to start a family—I guess it helped that we were more or less on the same page.” Again, the couple that reported the highest level of communication and strived most transparently for equal roles reported no major conflict.

Table 5: Participant Responses to the Question: “How would you describe any conflict you and your partner experienced in deciding how to manage careers and childcare?”

<i>Couple</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Quote*</i>
1	F	“It wasn’t angry conflict; it wasn’t bitter conflict or resentful conflict; it was kind of floundering conflict: ‘What do we do?’ as opposed to an accusatory: ‘You’re doing this; you’re not doing that.’ It was, ‘Oh goodness, life has completely changed,’ you know, ‘How do we approach this; what do we do?’ ....I guess I would describe the conflict as stressful as opposed to divisive.”
1	M	“Our conflict was essentially. ‘[My wife’s] career is going to have to suffer now.’ And I’d like to think we’ve taken some pretty aggressive steps to minimize that, but I’m not sure that [my wife] was realistically, especially financially, able to avoid that....It wasn’t like we ever had an argument about it. I think we both just sort of accepted the reality of it.”
2	F	“I was really pushing to get a nanny to stay home with [our daughter], and I realized that it was not as realistic....It was just pretty much a disagreement. We were trying to weigh the pros and cons of all of the different options that we had, um, and ultimately common sense sort of won out, and so we did look elsewhere and we found her current provider.”
2	M	“I guess the only real conflict was, let me think how to put this, where, like, the daycare to pick....[and] by visiting places where I was anticipating where I was going to send [the baby], I decided that [my partner’s] idea was better.”
3	F	“I think it’s been fairly conflict free so far...[but when my husband brought up the possibility of him staying at home with our son] I wouldn’t have thought that that would make me mad....but I mean, it kind of made me mad, like that obligates me to make money; it like obligates me to work....Maybe you can’t even anticipate conflict....I mean I think he was being nice, but...I was like, ew, like, I don’t know. I didn’t even like it.”
3	M	“Well, how would I describe that? Um. [long pause] I think [pause] there has been a lot of sort of silent conflict. It’s not something that we fight about or anything like that. [pause] I don’t know why this is so hard to describe. Um. I think we both had these expectations and have sort of...hum. [pause] Well, there’s been a substantial amount of conflict and it hasn’t been, sort of, of the loud shouting variety. Um. [pause] We just both, uh, want kind of different things and don’t really now how to uh [pause].”
4	F	“I don’t know—we did not really have any conflict.”
4	M	“I would say that conflict has been minimal.... I think both of us try to be as accommodating to the other as possible.”
5	F	“When I decided to be in school [it] was because it was a source of income basically.... I started crying because I knew that I would have to do it, but there was no real conflict. And since then, I’ve had to say a couple of times, ‘Maybe you could come home,’ you know, ‘a little earlier. Maybe you could not take on so many other responsibilities.’ But there’s never really been any real conflict about it....normally I’ve been able to just say something and....It tends to then change his behavior—just expressing what I need.”
5	M	“She’s pretty good about that; I mean, she recognizes the fact that if I’m not employed, we’re broke, and we lose our house and our cars and everything we’ve worked hard to get. Ah, so, she’s been good about it, but the conflict, she just kind of says, ‘look, I’m gonna take care of this,’ if she says, ‘I need you to do this,’ then I’ll take care of it, but other than that, she just handles it. That’s been really nice.”
6	F	“So I think that his family, that that’s kind of like a conflict; I think sometimes I’ll kind of make snide remarks like, ‘Oh, you know, so did you tell your mom we’re looking for daycare? Oh, what did she say?’ You know, and sometimes I just wonder if a piece of him is siding with that, with his family’s views on it, and just wondering if sometimes he thinks that I should stay home.”
6	M	“I think it was overall constructive. Like it, I don’t feel like we got into arguments and things like that about it....We talked a lot about it; we knew we wanted to start a family—I guess it helped that we were more or less on the same page.”

\*These quotes represent only a portion of the participants’ whole response to the question.

### *Financial Concerns*

At times, participants reported the influence of financial concerns, personal values about family or childrearing, along with other circumstances as factors in their discussion process with their partner. Within two couples, participants reported one partner's career taking "precedence" due to its primacy in paying the bills. Another couple (couple 5) reported that the only reason the female partner went back to work was because they could not afford to live off of only the male partner's salary. "Finances were pretty much the reason that I came back to work when I did. We just financially needed to do it; we purchased a house last year, and probably shouldn't have bought the house that we did." Another participant, the female partner in couple 3 who was reported as the breadwinner, stated that, though they could afford to have one income, an expectation for a certain standard of living affected their choice to both work. "We both wanted to stay [in our jobs] and I think there [were] financial factors that we both wanted to, you know, live comfortably." Alternately, some couples reported that having the financial ability to survive primarily off of only one income sealed the deal for the female parent to stay at home or for both parents to have more flexibility with time commitments to both careers and their child. One participant (in couple 1), who reported the highest approximate annual income of those interviewed, stated: "Sure it'd be terrific to have an extra 100 grand a year—but, ah, [my wife] would get to spend far less time with [our son]. Um, she would hate it; she wouldn't enjoy it at all. And frankly, I could probably get a job that would pay me a lot more money, but I like hanging out with my kid, so [laughs]." Ten out of the twelve (83%) individuals interviewed directly referenced money as a factor in the arrangement they came to with their spouse.

Parents also spoke of the importance of the congruence of childcare situations with workday schedules. “Our work days overlap very well with the childcare situation we are in.” Proximity to the daycare of choice, employment status or career uncertainty, values about “acceptable parenting,” the kind of daycare environment, valuing socializing their children, expectations for roles within the family, confidence in one’s marketability for future jobs, institutional policies for leave or respect in the work environment for family life, and cultural expectations were all factors that these parents reported as influencing their arrangements for careers and childcare.

*Spousal Support, Accommodation of One Another’s Needs, and Compromise*

Since so much of today’s successful parenting and family management seems to rely on the teamwork of both parents, spousal support, accommodation of one another’s needs, and experiences of compromise emerged within participant responses. One question was also directly asked about compromise: “Do you feel that one partner compromised more to come to the arrangement you have? If so, can you explain?”

First, parents reported on how they provided or experienced spousal support and accommodation of one another’s needs. Also, not every interviewee commented on this issue. Table 6 illustrates the participant responses. As one parent (in couple 5) put it, simply feeling from her husband that he was interested in parenting felt supportive. “I think just his general desire, you know you could tell that he was interested in being her father and wanting to do well.” Interestingly, the couple that seemed to have the strongest unspoken expectations about arrangements for childcare and careers (couple 3) was the couple that did not comment on spousal support, and more on this couple will be presented when findings on satisfaction are presented below.

Table 6: Participant Responses to the Question: “Do you feel that one partner compromised more to come to the arrangement you have? If so, can you explain?”

<i>Couple</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Quote*</i>
1	F	“[One of the qualities I appreciate most about my husband] is his absolute focus and dedication on our kid, you know. He is as invested in [our son’s] stuff; he knows whether his toenails have been clipped...and he’s very um, concerned about you know, [our son] being a happy kid....We have a basis of a kind of, a basis in our marriage for a kind of friendship and a kind of respect and understanding for each others work, which I guess is the other component.”
1	M	“I guess it depends on the definition of compromise....[My wife] had a very tough pregnancy....And then just the physical trauma, the breast feeding, the exhaustion, the hormones, everything, so I think that she certainly had to give up a lot more for the first...and I actually, when she was pregnant, didn’t compromise a wit, come to think of it....So I think probably in the first eighteen months, she has had to compromise more, which is both a function of biology and a function of economics, because I’m pretty much the only breadwinner.”
2	M	“And [my partner’s] been great. I mean there are times when I get home and maybe I want the night off, so she’ll take care of everything. So then I can just sit and relax, maybe get on the computer and check out ESPN or something....And then, uh, I try to do the same thing for her....So in general, it’s worked out great.”
4	F	“We try to accommodate one another’s needs.”
4	M	“Early on, right after, because of [my wife’s] change in job position happened about the same time that [our baby] was born, there was an issue of her not having accumulated much sick leave or that stuff. So we really made an attempt to not use hers if we didn’t have to. So, yeah, I would try to work around that in whatever way I could.”
5	F	“I mean, it’s hard at the very beginning, things were very hard, because I don’t think he really knew what to do, like even to take care of me, like, I wanted family to take care of me and he didn’t really want anyone around, as much. But I was like, ‘But I need care, too, you know at this point, it’s very hard for me to manage all of these things.’... I feel like it took time for us to adjust to our new roles, and for him to realize that I can’t just take care of him. [small laugh]”
5	M	“Uh, as far as my partner goes, I feel like [my wife] is very supportive of trying to make everything work and tends to, tends to curtail her own life in that effort without discussion.... And so I feel like that’s super-supportive of her, for me, but may in the long run, I don’t know how long your study is, but may in the long run make her resentful of that.”
6	F	“[My husband] had other opportunities for post-doc—but he chose this area because there would be more opportunities for me [in my career]....And also it was really in line with his research interests as well; I mean, he didn’t sacrifice anything really for his future.... And then when I was interviewing [to go back to work myself], my husband shifted his schedule so that I would go and he would stay at home with [our baby].” AND [Regarding her husband’s response to her decision to go back to work or not] “We just did what felt right as we went through it. And he was, you know, like, ‘Any decision you make, I’ll support you.’”
6	M	“I’ve stayed at home a few times, like full days, and I know how hard it is for her to do, you know, especially if you, if it’s just you and the child and you don’t really have that many people that you can do stuff with during the day or something, so it’s tough to do, so I could see that it was progressively getting tough for her mentally to do.”

\*These quotes represent only a portion of the participants’ whole response to several different questions, as no one question was asked directly about spousal support.

The parents interviewed also gave insightful comments about their feelings of having compromised in the relationship since new parenthood. From couple 5:

I feel like I definitely compromised more [than my husband]...at one point someone said like, "It's amazing how much your schedules change when, after the baby's born," and my husband said, "We haven't really found that to be the case," and I said, "Psha! For you!" [laughs] You know, and that's how different it was for him, cause his life didn't really change that much—he slept kind of generally normal except hearing a baby cry at night or having it next to him. Um, I think life didn't change very much for him: it changed completely for me.

Alternately, her husband reported a different perspective. "I would say that we both compromised equally." He stated that he wished he could be home with his daughter.

But ah, I would tell you that she probably feels that she's compromised the most on this because she obviously has to make a lot of changes in schedule and stuff to be with [the baby] all the time, but if you take in the whole picture, I would say we compromise equally because I'm not getting to be with my daughter in her formative years.

In other instances, the women in the partnerships felt fine about the compromises they made, while their male partners were very cognizant of those compromises made by their counterparts. When asked if she felt one partner had compromised more, one mother (in couple 1) stated, "No. We were so ready to have a kid. We so wanted to have a baby. Um, we would have done anything, you know, and the compromises we've made seem so small, compared to what we've gotten in return." Her husband reported that she compromised a lot with the physical discomfort of her pregnancy and went on to say, "You know, and I actually, when she was pregnant, didn't compromise a wit, come to think of it." A different mother (in couple 6) who had stayed home and put off pursuing work after getting her PhD while she did fulltime childcare, stated:

[From the outside] I would have kind of judged it as, 'I compromised more, because I didn't get the stellar post-doc. I didn't even try to do that,' kind of thing. But actually going through it and going with what I felt was right at the moment, I



don't feel like I'm compromising anything; like, I'd do it over 10 times....I think my idea of what compromise means has changed through this process, so I don't think that we're compromising anything really.

Her husband, on the other hand, recognized her career sacrifices differently.

She had, I don't know if you want to call it, like, a hiccup in her career path. It's not to say that having a baby is bad or anything, but like, in terms of her career, we felt that because she was going to stay at home, she wasn't pursuing her career like right after her PhD, like I feel like she did compromise, like, her career path to be with [our baby] at home for a little while.

In two couples (couple 2 and couple 4), both members reported that they did not think either partner compromised more in their arrangement, though one woman emphasized that she felt she had had to work very hard to bring her husband into an equal parenting role with decisions for their child, not just for childcare tasks. Finally, there was one couple (couple 3) where the female partner reported that neither partner had compromised more, while her husband reported strong feelings that he had compromised more in having a baby to begin with.

Yeah, I think I compromised more. Uh, in the sense that I was, we, we both wanted children, but I did not, this just wasn't the best time for me. I wanted to postpone it for a couple more years until I could hopefully finish my post-doc and get a real job.... I just thought that it would be better for me to wait a couple of years and be a little more in control of my work situation and be able to contribute more financially. And uh, so I think compromised more....I guess the conflict was between my career clock and [my wife's] biological clock....in the end, it just seemed like, it was less of a sacrifice for me to um, have kids now than for her to, for us to maybe end up not having kids.

### *Satisfaction*

Participants were asked two questions to illicit information about their satisfaction with their arrangements. "How do you feel that your wants and needs were adequately or inadequately considered in the process? If so, what contributed to this? If not, what would have helped?" and, "How do you feel satisfied or unsatisfied with the decision that you

came to?” Responses that reflected each participant’s general outlook are presented in Table 7 and Table 8 respectively. Parents’ thoughts on what contributed to feeling that their wants and needs were adequately considered or what would have helped will be presented in the discussion section during a look at best practices and recommendations by parents.

Table 7: Participant Responses to the Question: “How do you feel that your wants and needs were adequately or inadequately considered in the process?”

<i>Couple</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Quote*</i>
1	F	“My wants and needs were totally considered in the process.”
1	M	“Oh very much so....I think all of my professional wants an needs have been well taken care of.”
2	F	“[My partner] and I were able to come to all the decisions that we did pretty easily....[but] I would say my needs were not adequately met through my career.”
2	M	“My personal wants and needs are definitely fulfilled. I have no problems with anything the way they worked out.”
3	F	“I think they were, I think they were adequately considered, but...I think I just kind of tailor my needs to fit what I think is going to happen. I think if I’d have had a need to stay home, like, I’m not sure that could be met, but I didn’t really, I didn’t have that need, and I think I didn’t have that need because I knew that wasn’t possible....There were definitely some times when I started resenting being the default person to take care of [the baby], like I would have wanted it to be a little more equal.”
3	M	“I think that they were inadequately considered, mostly because nothing could withstand the power of the biological clock and everything seemed to sort of insignificant next to it. And I think that also [my wife], you know, she knew that I wanted kids and so I think that to her that meant that I wanted kids the way that she wanted kids. And I think that I had a similar problem where I sort of imagined that our situation with kids would be the way that I was imagining it and we didn’t talk about it before we started trying.”
4	F	“I was only dissatisfied at the beginning, but that was more because I completely underestimated how demanding a newborn is....I would really say as soon as we gave him the first bottle and I could leave the house without him, I was perfectly happy.”
4	M	“Oh, I think my wants and needs were very adequately considered.”
5	F	“I feel like I didn’t convey my needs, um, and I didn’t enforce my needs. I feel like it was—I am a bad communicator with my spouse. Because of kind of my own history and our history, I have a hard time asking people for things.”
5	M	“Ok, well the boss situation: I feel like he didn’t take anything into consideration, didn’t care. Uh, as far as my partner goes, I feel like [my wife] is very supportive of trying to make everything work.... Now, I will say that if we were taking into consideration that before we had the child, we were discussing who was going to take care of the baby, those wants and needs were kind of dictated by, ‘We need the cash to keep functioning.’ It wasn’t like [my wife] denied my needs, but certainly they were not the ones that were ultimately taken. Those were hers. But it was not by choice, it was by necessity.”
6	F	“I think most of my needs are met.... Just, sometimes, I definitely need more time to myself—I think that that’s one of the needs that aren’t met right now.... and then just one-on-one time with [my husband] and I.”
6	M	“I think they’ve been adequately considered.”

\*These quotes represent only a portion of the participants’ whole response the question.

Table 8: Participant Responses to the Question: “How do you feel satisfied or unsatisfied with the decision that you came to?”

<i>Couple</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Quote*</i>
1	F	“I feel very satisfied, but I am ready to work more.”
1	M	“Very satisfied. Unsatisfied only—and it’s a very qualified unsatisfied—I wish our childcare could have been a bit more consistent.”
2	F	“I’m not satisfied with the situation that we’re in. [My partner’s] career is amazing and he loves it; it’s great, and it’s working very well with our family life. And [our baby] loves her childcare provider. But, um, I need to change careers.”
2	M	“I feel satisfied because I get to spend time with [the baby].”
3	F	“But I feel like within the constraints of what’s realistic, I’m happy.”
3	M	“I guess I feel completely satisfied. Well, um, I’m kind of dissatisfied. I feel like I’m a bad, not bad, inadequate parent because I spend too much time at work and I’m an inadequate worker because I try to spend too much time with being a parent.”
4	F	“I think it works great for us. I mean, the way it works now, it’s ideal for our living circumstances. So, yeah, I like what we’re doing.”
4	M	“I feel like we’re both working really well at trying to be as equal as possible. I think we’re doing a pretty good job. [laughs] I hope so anyway. Um, yeah, so I feel pretty good about it.”
5	F	“I feel very satisfied with the current decision, the current situation.”
5	M	“Well, I’m satisfied that I feel that [our baby’s] getting the best case scenario for [her], so that makes me satisfied. Personally, I’m not satisfied, because if [my wife] would have gone to work, I wouldn’t be dealing with the crap I’m dealing with right now [at work].”
6	F	“I feel satisfied. I feel like I’ve had a good amount of time with [the baby] at home and that he’s gotten—we’ve had that time to bond.... And in terms of career, I think that this job meets my needs for sure, in terms of feeling that I’m respected, and also I know I’m going to be intellectually challenged, for sure.”
6	M	“I feel quite satisfied.”

\*These quotes represent only a portion of the participants’ whole response the question.

### *Changes to Childcare or Career Arrangements and Why Changes Were Important*

When asked if any changes in their arrangements took place, 9 out of 12 participants in the study (75%) identified modifications to their original arrangements that had happened or were about to happen. Of the three participants who did not identify any changes, two of them were partners within the same couple (couple 4), and they both reported regular discussions about how if they needed to change jobs in the near future then the arrangements for childcare responsibilities would adjust. The wife in the partnership stated, “If either one of us gets another job, then we’ll probably have to adjust our schedules,” and she went on to emphasize that if the flexibility of their working

arrangements change, “then we will have to change.” Her husband identified the same situation as an ongoing discussion, “we’ve discussed that possibility already, we’ve talked about it, I mean, even in the past week.” The other participant who reported little change to their situation was not the primary care provider and was the husband in the partnership (couple 5). He stated, “I don’t think we changed very much. I mean, she’s kind of taken on a little more, but, like I said, because she was able to, rather than because it was the necessity of it.” His partner, on the other hand, identified lots of changes, including the influence of career opportunities and financial needs: “There’ve been lots of changes...mostly career kind of opportunities.” She went on to identify financial needs as a factor for her decision to go back to school right away after birth since she was offered a paid fellowship only if she was taking classes, “because of different opportunities being offered, like me being offered a fellowship.”

The remaining eight participants (four couples) reported that there were changes to how they chose to arrange childcare and careers. Two couples reported that they made or were about to make a change to using daycare. For couple 1, the change was from having the child at home while they worked from home with sporadic in-home childcare to a daycare outside of the home where the child would be able to social with other children as well. The husband stated, “We just need to have the security of the schedule,” while the wife reported, “It was a combination of realizing that he had a need and also there were services out there to completely to give us the life that we wanted to have in terms of work.” Within couple 6, both partners reported that the wife was ready to quit doing full-time childcare and was ready to go to work. “It’s time to do something else.” The remaining two couples that reported that they made changes to their original

arrangements did so by either adjusting work hours or switching childcare providers.

Within the couple who adjusted work hours (couple 3), the couple found that the wife working full-time was unrealistic after she returned to work and they have continued to extend the time period she works at 75% her usual billing time.

Um, the main change that has taken place from the original plan is that [my wife] is still not back to fulltime. I think she was planning on being able to be back at full time at 12 weeks and she's not going to be able to go back until Jan 1st, which will be 9 months.

The wife in this marriage also reported that she was unable to work from home as she had originally planned to do.

I had also thought from the beginning that I would work some from home, and that would be a way that I could, like, be not totally getting no pay. That was completely out the window. I could not get anything done; I mean, it was all I could do to get myself lunch.

The couple that reported the need to switch childcare providers (couple 2) did so since the provider was moving thirty minutes away, which made their schedules too difficult to continue with her. The male partner also reported that they switched to alternating dropping off and picking up the baby from childcare, since one person taking the responsibility effected the ability to get full-time work hours.

All but one participant in the study spoke of significant changes to their arrangements or of discussions of anticipated changes in the future. Moreover, how to manage adjustments were a large part of the discussion processes reported.

### *Support Systems*

Several questions were asked of participants that elicited responses about the role of support systems in their lives as parents and professionals. The questions asked included, "How did each of your work situations influence your decision for who would

be responsible for childcare?” “How would you describe family, social or work support systems for your decisions for childcare arrangements?” and “What factors influenced the arrangement you came to?” Findings regarding social, family, and work or institutional supports are presented below.

### *Social Support Systems*

The primary uses of social supports for the participants in the study were for help with babysitting and childcare; “venting purposes,” verification that their child’s development or behavior was normal, and awareness that other parents go through similar struggles; or to simply share stories about their children. One participant also found it important that friends understood about differences in scheduling needs for parents. Some participants found that being able to share stories about their children at work was a very supportive experience for them. Two couples (couple 1 and couple 6) commented on the challenge of being new to the area, and thus not having made many friends yet.

One male participant (in couple 2) did not report on social support systems in his life, but rather focused on work flexibility and help from family with childcare in response to the question about family, social or work support systems. The responses of the remaining 11 participants are shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Participant Responses to the Question: “How would you describe social support systems for your decisions for childcare arrangements?”

<i>Couple</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Quote*</i>
1	F	“In terms of a social support system, we’re new in town....so that’s not there, but....we’ve got nice neighbors and we’ve got some parents who will help, so we’re in good shape.”
1	M	“Social, um, you know, I don’t want to say nonexistent—our sporadic childcare is provided by a friend—um, so I don’t know if that really counts; we’re still paying her. Um, and we have some friends with kids and we sort of accommodate each other’s schedules, and there’s always something for the kids to do.”
2	F	“All of my friends are either just married or they aren’t even close to being married or settling down....I do have a really good friend who had a baby when I was in college....we would email, and [she] would sort of check up on me and make sure I was ok...when it’s your first, you just have no idea what to expect.”
3	F	“I think it’s important to interact with other people that are going through similar things or other moms....It’s one of the things I really like about daycare, that I interact with all these other parents who have kids about the same age....So I think really talking to people that are really doing it is a good way to ease your mind, because I realize talking to all the other moms, almost all of the problems I have, like, they go through too.”
3	M	“We have one set of close friends who just had their first child too....so that’s been a great resource. We can just sort of bombard them with questions....I feel like we get quite a bit of help from the parents at daycare....I know [my wife] usually spends a half an hour there before she goes to work, and the other parents are there and they just talk about kids’ stuff....[One neighbor], she helps us out...we haven’t had her baby-sit for us, but she’s volunteered. She just loves babies, so she’ll just come over and hold [our baby] or play with him or whatever for a half an hour while we need to do stuff.”
4	F	“And for a couple of nights—we just started doing that—we have a babysitter who is one of the teachers [our baby] has at the daycare, so she, we hire her occasionally, if we want to have an evening out. But we are just beginning to do that; I think the first year of his life, we were not very flexible with trusting people with our child [laughs].”
4	M	“Um, social angle: We have lots of friends with small children....[so if we had a question] I would call up [our friend] and say, ‘What did you do?’ and that kind of thing. I think we had support there....We’re beginning to look into more social support...in terms of the babysitting and stuff.... And there are people at work that I talk to about [our baby]—what he’s doing and what he’s not doing....That ability to just sit down and talk through with someone else what’s going on and what expectations we had and that kind of stuff is very nice. There are relationships like that at work as well, so that’s been pretty good, I think. Both of us have appreciated those opportunities.”
5	F	“I’ve formed networks with other moms to do childcare sharing. I’ve got another mom that, another mom and I, we just met because we both needed the same thing. We share childcare two days a week, so I take care of the kids in the mornings, and she takes care of the kids in the afternoons. So that’s been an essential connection that we’ve made.”
5	M	“We don’t have very many [friends] outside of us; we just hang out together.”
6	F	“Not very many of my friends have kids, so I guess I don’t really talk too much about that....And actually friends—yeah, there’s one person I’ve been talking to—it’s actually my friend’s mom....Just hearing different people’s experiences and stuff like that.”
6	M	“[Talking to] close friends was also quite helpful, for venting purposes and that kind of thing. It was good to have other people there—to have a couple there that just had a child and experienced this whole process, that was really nice as well, and who could share stories and stuff like that with them. It was good. It’s been a little bit difficult in [this town] because...other than a couple people, we didn’t know anyone in this area, so the support hasn’t really been there in this area for [my wife], I would say.”

\*These quotes represent only a portion of the participants’ whole response the question.

Two participants in particular reported on social supports earlier on in the interview in response to other, broader questions. One woman (from couple 2) spoke of the importance of her childcare provider who is also a mother.

It's nice too from my level, because there's another mother that knows my daughter really, really well, that I can relate to, that gets excited when she gets her first tooth, and you know, when she takes her first step, and that type of thing.

The female respondent from couple 6 also emphasized the challenge of being new in town when she answered the first question of the interview:

So that's a little bit of an adjustment for me, but just, being in a new place, not knowing very many people in terms of support and stuff like that, so I just like to talk on the phone a lot to my family and friends for that kind of support.

As the table above shows, the issue of not knowing many people in the area was salient for her husband as well (male respondent in couple 6).

### *Family Support Systems*

The existence of good family support or the lack thereof seemed to play an even more salient role than social support systems for the parents in this study. The lack of involvement of parents or family criticism of the participants' choices were seen as "hurtful," while family involvement viewed as helpful was termed "terrific" or "great." Table 10 below illustrates the bulk of the participants' responses about the role of support systems in their experience.



Table 10: Participant Responses to the Question: “How would you describe family support systems for your decisions for childcare arrangements?”

<i>Couple</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Quote*</i>
1	F	“Um, we moved, um, back to the south so we could be closer to our mother so she could help out. So, you know, we feel that we have someone we can go to when we need someone to come into town and help us out.”
1	M	“So my family’s been pretty much zip, and in fact, very hurtful in some ways; when [our baby] was born they came down and stayed...they weren’t there long. [My wife’s] family’s been terrific....If we called her [mom] up and said, “____, we really, really need you,” she’d be there, and it takes her 5 and a half hours to drive, she’d be there in 5....She has this wonderful thing—it’s called Camp Gamgam; so for two weeks every summer...[our son] goes to Gamgam’s house and she has this whole range of activities, there’s swimming lessons, the nature center, the goat farm and story hour at the library, and it’s just, and she keeps a whole journal of it, it’s Camp Gamgam, and t-shirts, it’s just terrific. So her family, her mother especially, being over in Knoxville has been terrific.”
2	F	“My family support system: my sister is really great....she has just been really supportive emotionally. And [my partner’s] sisters-in-law, they both have really young children also, and we were all sort of pregnant at the same time, so they were really great to talk to, and you know, we were sort of all going through it together.”
2	M	“And family, uh, actually [our childcare provider] was gone on vacation in July, I think it was, for a couple days, so my mom came down for two weeks and she took care of [our baby] during that time period, so then we had someone else to watch her.”
3	F	“I feel like our family support, I think, has been quite good, given that they’re not local. And I think that is pretty valuable. My mom is like 4 hours away but still—like, my husband was pretty ill a couple of months ago for quite a while, and still she came and helped me cause I was, like, just completely going insane. And so I feel like family is as helpful as they can be.”
3	M	“Um, family, our families have both been, I think, very supportive—financially and with their time. Yeah, just trying to help us.”
4	F	“We don’t have any family living nearby. Both of [my husband’s] parents live in North Carolina, but it’s a two hour drive, so they babysat for us twice, but it’s, it’s a big deal, so that’s not a regular thing for us.”
4	M	“Family support systems, um [laughs] because we live so far away from my parents and so very, very far away from her parents, um, they really have not provided any kind of material support....Like, being able to baby-sit....Emotional support from our families: I think my parents recognize...that we would be looking for daycare....Um, her family, her mother in particular, gave her a lot of grief about putting [the baby] in daycare.”
5	F	“Like I said my sister-in-law and mother played a crucial role in allowing me to pursue school, which was a source of income and improves my future career choices.... And then [my husband’s] parents have come a couple of times to stay for a week to take care of [our baby] and help us get our stuff together.”
5	M	“Family support systems from her side have been, good, for the baby. Ah, her mother and her sister-in-law came to our house everyday, for the first semester she was in school after she’d had the baby, and took care of the baby, because we did not have daycare at that point....My family...only came in for two weeks...right after she had the baby and helped then, but she didn’t ask [for them to come again], so they don’t come.”
6	F	“For family, it’s been good. My younger brother, his fiancée, I’ve been talking to her because they have a 2 year old who’s in daycare. And she waited until about 9 months, so when [her daughter] was 9 months, she went into a family daycare....she’s been really good to talk to for that, because she’s now going through it.”
6	M	“Family support has always been great. I think that both our families have supported us in our careers but they’ve also supported us with the family.”

\*These quotes represent only a portion of the participants’ whole response the question.

Seven out of 12 respondents (58%) emphasized support they had received from family in the form of babysitting and physically helping out during difficult times, while 4 of the 12 participants (33%) emphasized emotional support as important from their families.

As with social support systems, some participants spoke of family supports earlier on in the interview as they described what arrangements they came to for careers and childcare. The wife in couple 5 in the table above reported in more detail earlier in the interview on the “crucial” role her family played for her.

So I went to class 4 days a week and my mother and sister-in-law took turns driving me an hour and a half, you know, every day that I had class to drive to take care of my baby at home, so they were like the most incredible people just outrageously supportive, and made a schedule so they could come and take care of [the baby], and then I had a couple of people around here that would pick up the days that they couldn't come. And they would come just so I could go to class for an hour and then do my homework.

Couple 1 also reported (see Table 10) that proximity to family was very important, with the wife stating that they moved in order to live closer to her mother for support with parenting. Her husband spoke earlier in the interview about how his mother-in-law was supportive beyond “Camp Gamgam”:

Sometimes I think [my travel for work is] very tough for [my wife], uh, but her mother comes from Knoxville, with not a lot of regularity, but if I'm going to be somewhere for, you know, a week....And when [my wife] was off doing her masters program, she would go for like two weeks at a stretch. Her mother would come...

Alternately, for parents without much family support, some reported that living closer to family would have been helpful. For example, on participant's response when asked what would have helped her through this process, she stated, “I think having more family around.”

### *Work and Institutional Support Systems*

Work support systems seemed to be the most strongly commented on of the support systems discussed in this study. Participants had a wide range of experiences, but overall were very affected by their work support or lack thereof. Their responses to this aspect of their experiences came out in several of the questions within the interviews, not just those directly addressing support systems.

Two participants, husband and wife, both worked from home. In this arrangement, they described work support as “non-existent,” with the exception of the male partner getting a break on assignments when talking to editors about having to cover childcare, as commented on earlier in this chapter. Both partners identified this issue as the only support from work, with the female partner stating about the issue, “I’ve had a much harder time [than my husband].”

Couple 2 had different experiences of work support. The female partner also described work support as “non-existent”, stating, “I don’t know that I really had any support from work.” She described having “amazing co-workers” but reported that since they were mostly men, they could not relate to her as a new mother. She went on to describe what would have been supportive for her at work.

I’m not asking for special, preferential treatment: I just wanted someone who took my work as a professional seriously and didn’t always have a foreshadow of the fact that I had this commitment [as a mother] that was larger than my job outside of the office.

The male partner in the couple (they are unmarried) reported that the flexibility of his employers about his schedule was supportive for him, so that he could “leave a little early” or cover childcare due to a doctor’s appointment for the caregiver. Nonetheless,

the female partner commented on his inability to take an “unpaid paternity leave” due to his company policies as a stressor after the birth.

Within couple 3, the husband in the partnership perceived his work support as “non-existent” as well. “Work support systems, I think, are nonexistent. I mean, well there’s daycare at my work, so in that sense they’re supportive, but otherwise not.” Interestingly, for this participant, he perceived work support as something other than the institutional structure of onsite daycare or the company’s paternity leave policy, which he described as “flexible.” Earlier in the interview with him, he described the nature of his expectations at work, which perhaps provide insight into what would have been more supportive for him.

Basically I’m just working until I can get sufficient and high quality publications so I can establish a real job, and so the best way to do that is to work a lot—and really devote yourself to that. And I guess, since we’ve had [our baby], I just haven’t, there’s just not enough time. Yeah, I don’t know. But I think, I certainly extended the length of my post-doc, and it’s just not clear to me if that, um, that you can, in my field, be really involved with your kids and have an academic position, or a research position.

This was a sentiment I heard from more than one participant in academia, which will also be presented in the findings from the next couple as well. First, though this participant in couple 3 went on to describe his company’s flexible paternity leave policy, he seemed to experience the quality of work support more through the expectations for productivity. “I think there’s pressure from both work places that the other parent would be contributing more to childcare to relieve their employees’ burdens so they’d have more time to work.” His wife’s comments perhaps shed more light on his experiences of work support. She stated, “I feel like at my husband’s work, the support has been not, not as good [as mine]. Like, we both get the feeling that sometimes his boss just resents our kid, because it

makes him work less.” She reported that she felt the fact that her boss had children was important in his ability to support her.

While my company policies are not good, my boss is very understanding—I think a lot of that is because he has three kids and so he understands...I think it makes a big difference whether or not your boss has kids in how much they can relate. I guess it’s not just the policies, cause I think, I mean [my husband’s employer’s] policies are better; they’re more family friendly. The fact that I have an understanding boss is maybe in the end as valuable as the policies. I mean not financially, I mean clearly I’d be better off if they paid maternity leave, but for more your long-term emotional stability, in the end, it’s maybe people-you-work-with’s attitude and not what’s in the books.

Her husband also expressed his own views about her work support. “I think it’s really tough for [my wife].” He described her as a “pioneer” in the company, stating,

She’s the only woman PhD who decided to have kids and all the other PhDs who have kids are men and their, at least the impression that she gets is that their wives are doing most of the parenting and they are doing most of the breadwinning...I’m just not sure that they have any expectations for a woman in that position because I don’t think there’s been one before.

When asked about work support ten out of twelve (83%) participants reported on the attitude of co-workers or supervisors toward parenthood or their expected role in parenthood as having significance for them.

Couple 4 identified the significance of daycare provided onsite as a work support as well as the support provided by co-workers who also had children. The wife in the couple stated, “The daycare center that comes with my job, it’s very good; we love it.” Her husband further emphasized the usefulness of on-site daycare, as it allowed her to breastfeed their child during her lunch hour. The wife in this couple stated that she also found it supportive to have a boss who was a parent as well. “My boss is very supportive; he has three children of his, by himself, and he and his wife work fulltime. The husband spoke of the support of being able to talk about children at work.

[My wife] had co-workers who had small children, you know, a few months to a year or so before we had [our baby], and who have had babies since then, and so she has the opportunity to sort of share baby stories and that sort of thing at work.

Several couples reported with seeming pleasure about the benefit of being able to share stories with fellow co-workers who were also parents. This participant went on to identify other aspects of his wife's work environment and flexibility that created a supportive situation for them as new parents.

And then work support, I think, [my wife's] job was very willing for her to do some telecommuting stuff during those first three months....She didn't really have the three months worth of time to take, and so, they were willing for her to remain at home and work and just come in for important meetings or whatever until the 3 months was up and then for her to come back in and sort of be in place more full time. That was very, her supervisor was very accommodating in that area and they were just like, 'for our weekly lab meetings and that kind of thing, come in, that would be great, and then you can work at home,' or whatever, so as long as she was getting some stuff done that was fine with him.

This same participant reported further on his own work flexibility as a major support during new parenthood.

Um, and as I've said, my job is flexible enough that I think when I needed to stay home, I mean there have been times when I've stayed home and I haven't really told anybody, cause, they weren't really watching my door to see if I was coming in or not. And as long as I was responding to people via email or whatever when they had a question about something, as long as I got things done when I needed to, they didn't care where I was doing it [laughs]. So that's been very nice to have that kind of position.

He was not alone in his stated recognition of flexible work schedules being a supportive factor for parents. Nine out of the twelve parents interviewed (75%) reported that a flexible work schedule was helpful, allowing them to adapt to the sometimes-unpredictable demands of childcare. Even with the support of a flexible work schedule, just as the male partner in couple 4 reported, academia proved to hold significant

challenges for this parent as well, to the point of reevaluating his career path based on what he saw with role models in his field.

I guess over the last year or two I've begun to question some of those role models, because I've begun to ask questions like, you know, it's a lot of work [laughs] and to try to do a tenure track thing and have a family and whatever else, so I've been sort of reevaluating which role models I might want to emulate in terms of those things as well...

When I asked this participant about any changes that needed to take place in their arrangements for careers and childcare, he reported, "I'm considering a much broader range of occupations [laughs] than I was previously because of reevaluating this whole tenure track academia thing."

The wife in couple 5 had a positive experience of work support, though she left work to provide full-time childcare.

I've had a lot of support from the work that I left. I was working at a church and they were all very supportive through the whole process, um, emotionally. And uh, and financially. A lot of people just gave us money, um, to help.

Alternately, her husband reported extremely poor work support, describing his boss' attitude about paternal involvement.

My work support system has been crap. My boss, my principle told me—who had just had a baby, not a month before we did, but it was his second child—ah, said, I said, 'I want to take a week off from school, because my wife's going to have this baby, and then I want a week,' and he said, 'You're not having a baby.' I was going to kill him; I'm already ready to quit my job.

When asked later in the interview what would have helped him to feel supported, he referred back to this experience.

Oh, you know, a compassionate boss. Uh, it just amazed me that he has two children, and still was writing off the fact that I wanted to spend the first week of my daughter's life with my daughter, you know. I'm allowed to take up to four months, by the family leave act, I think, and was requesting one week and got absolutely no sympathy. It was incredible.

The final couple that was interviewed, identified as couple 6, also had a lot to say about work supports. The wife in the pair stated that when she interviewed for a job after taking time off with her newborn, her employer's attitude toward work/life balance was at the forefront of her decision to take the position or not. "That was a big thing for me in deciding to take this job, is that I really feel like that's almost valued, the fact that I have a life outside of science." She also identified "on-site facilities" and benefits for parents as "a big help." She reported several times during her interview about her negative work experience with her PhD advisor when she was pregnant and how it shaped her next decisions for her career.

I didn't apply for post-docs in academics here and one of the factors here was the bad experience with my PhD advisor. And I know that not everybody is like him or whatever, but it really—I'd like to think that it didn't affect me that much, but it did—and so, that affected my decision to kind of, like, I was honestly too scared to apply for positions in academics.

Additionally, she reported that her experience with this PhD advisor caused her to emphasize the importance of family life when she sought her next job.

If I didn't feel like the job and the people I was working with respected the fact that I have a family and that's important to me, then I wouldn't have done it. Because actually one of the things that my PhD advisor said to me was... 'If one is going to spend time doing things other than science, then they're not worth my time anymore.'

Her husband also focused on the lack of work/life balance in academia in his response to the question. "The kind of environment we're immersed in, everyone's career driven, more or less, in academia." As was discussed in the section on gender role expectations and in his wife's comments above, he also reported that his wife "had some tough times



with her former PhD advisor” which lead to her choosing to leave academia and pursue a career in industry after some time at home with their baby.

We didn't have much support around us, positive support I would say, especially that aspect with the work; it wasn't a friendly environment for [my wife] at that time; it was pretty horrible. And in that kind of environment where everyone else is also career driven and family kind of aspects get put to the side, it was a conflict that we struggled with.

This same participant reported on his own experience of work support within the academic arena. He described his impression from his advisor and his department as,

...if you wanted to try to pursue the career that you want to try to pursue [in academia], this [pregnancy] was seen as a distraction, even though [my advisor] had a child at that exact point in his life age-wise. I felt that that kind of support was, at least from the work part, wasn't good—it wasn't there.

This participant reported that right before he and his wife left the department, some efforts were made to initiate more childcare policies that would enable female PhD students to get some paid time off.

The participants of this study reported on the importance of family, social and work support systems. Additional findings will be covered in the final section of this chapter.

#### *Serendipitous findings*

While the findings presented thus far are organized based on possible hypotheses developed during the research process, there emerged a couple of other themes that I will term serendipitous findings. Those themes include the influence of participants being in periods of career development or having already established a firm career vs. having career uncertainty or being in the very beginning stages of career development; and the influence of flexibility in their approaches to their arrangements.

### *Career Development vs. Career Uncertainty*

Participants who were in the beginning stages of career development or were uncertain of their next career steps reported on the additional challenges that new parenthood presented for their career paths, while responses of participants with established careers revealed additional flexibility this status gave them in their choices as parents.

Several participants reported on the influence of their uncertainty in their next career steps. For couple 6, the wife's uncertainty with what to do next in her career influenced their decisions. "I guess we just, you know, talked about what we wanted to do, and [my husband] knew he wanted to do a post-doc and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do." Her husband discussed how her career uncertainty led to her taking some time off to care for their child.

And it seemed to me like she was uncertain as to what she wanted to do, and I felt like, I knew I wanted to continue down the road of academia—you know, so do a post-doc, possibly become a professor someday—so I kind of felt certain, this is what I wanted to do, and she was just kind of uncertain, in my opinion. She didn't know, like, if she wanted to do a post-doc or if she wanted to get a job or stay at home, so at some point we just decided that, well, we both agreed that she would stay at home for a little bit.

Interestingly, the wife in this couple felt comfortable with her uncertainty and taking some time away from work to do childcare, since she had already "proven" herself in her field.

I feel like I've been successful enough and proven myself that I could afford to take some time off, and be out of it and still look really attractive to do either a post-doc or to get a job. So I felt comfortable with taking some time away and that it wouldn't destroy my career or whatever.

Based on her response, it seems she felt that having established competency in her field enabled her to feel more freedom to choose what to do about childcare and work based on other factors. “I’ve been really successful in graduate school, so I didn’t feel like I had to necessarily, you know, just keep on pushing and pushing and pushing.”

Other participants had very clear career paths but were still in stages of career development that required a particular focus and time commitment to their work. One male participant (in couple 3) who worked as a post-doc with a clear career path reported on the challenge of his new time commitments as a parent.

I don’t know; I’m trying to balance those things. I find it really difficult. Actually think that it would be easy if I could just say, ‘ok I need to work all the time now to get my fulltime position and then I can lay off a little bit,’ although you can’t until you get tenure. Um, and I think it would be really easy, not easy to be a stay at home parent, but there would be a lot less conflict if I were a stay at home parent. This is something we’ve talked about. But sort of trying to balance the situation, uh [is difficult]; wanting my career to progress and wanting to spend as much time as I can with [my son].

Earlier in his interview, he reported that he would have preferred to have a more established career before becoming a parent. “I just thought that it would be better for me to wait a couple of years and be a little more in control of my work situation and be able to contribute more financially.” For couple 5, the wife’s career in the early development stages caused it to be viewed as less of a priority. Her husband explained how most of the childcare has been his wife’s responsibility since her work in conjunction with her graduate program was volunteer work.

So [my wife’s] had more of [the childcare] lumped onto her because of her ability to say, ‘You know what, this is volunteer, and I can kind of put it aside a little bit to deal with the child.’ So [our baby] has been mostly handled by my wife.

Alternately, for the participants who had established careers, this fact seemed to allow for greater flexibility in their choices. And to some extent, this factor overlapped with the notion that the partner with the established career had to pay the bills (since they had more stable or higher income) and so their careers took priority. One husband (in couple 1) with an established career stated,

Our conflict was essentially [my wife's] career is going to have to suffer now. Um, and I'd like to think we've taken some pretty aggressive steps to minimize that, um, but I'm not sure that [my wife] was realistically, especially financially, able to avoid that. You know, there was: the mortgage had to be paid.

In describing his own career, he stated: "I have the job that I've always wanted, that doesn't make me rich, but it pays me pretty well for an amount of work that is manageable, and it doesn't require any set hours at all." He reported being able to spend a lot of time with his baby and being very happy about it.

I mean I was old when we had a kid. I was uh, 41 and very happy to be 41, and to have a really good job that allowed me to work at home and spend a lot of time with [the baby].

Alternately, he described his wife's career as "an investment" and stated that she had been "a net drain on the household budget for a couple of years." During his interview, he reported instances of concern for his wife to have enough time to establish her writing career. "I would try to give [my wife] as much time as possible to [work on writing]." But as he stated earlier in this paragraph, her career had "to suffer" when they became parents, since his career paid the bills.

For couple 5, the situation of the more established career taking priority was a salient point. The husband in this partnership stated, "So I have the job that pays the bills—I've got to keep that: She's got the job that is volunteer; she kind of makes it work

[around childcare and other needs].” This participant was particularly differentiating in his definition of his and his wife’s careers.

Logistically, I am a schoolteacher, and my wife is a student and also does work... she also does some work with a non-profit. Uh, I think the key word in this is career. Ah, if you were to say things we were partaking in and that sort of thing, then I would consider all of that counting. Unfortunately, because of the bill issue, I have to consider mine as being career, because I’m getting paid for it and hers as being volunteer work.

The couples who commented on the salience of career development had at least one partner who was still in a stage of heightened career development, while the couples who were both well-established in their careers did not comment on this issue.

#### *Flexibility in Approaches to Arrangements*

Four out of the six couples interviewed (67%) reported taking a flexible approach to their arrangements and decision-making process. No questions were asked directly of this characteristic.

Couple 6 adopted “give it a try” as a kind of motto for the way to approach their decisions, along with “Let’s see how I feel [if I try this]” and “Let’s try this, and if it’s not working, we’ll adjust accordingly.” The husband in this partnership declared that this approach enabled them to make decisions without having “really hard conflict to resolve.” Within couple 4, the husband described “continuing adjustment as is necessary” as their approach to dealing with decisions as new parents with careers. The wife stated, “We kind of change it on the go.” This was similar for yet another couple (couple 3), where the husband described a flexible approach. “We just sort of figured it out as we went along.” His wife reported that she has not been able to be certain when would be right for her to return to full-time status at work, so she kept extending her part-time

(75%) status at work each month. “I was going to do it for a month, but then I would be like, ‘Oh, how about another month.’” For couple 1 that worked from home, the flexibility of their approach to childcare seemed to be the way of life for both partners. “We don’t have any kind of set schedule.” The husband described their process as “ad hoc” and “very flexible.”

### *Summary*

The findings suggest that there are a myriad of approaches to the process couples undergo as they sort out career and childcare responsibilities, wants, and needs. Participant narratives revealed the decision-making process for managing careers and childcare in first-time parenthood was shaped by gender role expectations of oneself and others, ability to communicate one’s own needs and levels of discussion within each couple, and the availability of good support systems in the form of friends, co-workers, family, institutional policies and supervisors’ support for family life. Perhaps two of the most significant findings were that all the participants except for one male reported struggles with gender role expectations and that all of the participants who were in academia reported significant struggle with balancing family and work life. There was no one successful approach to balancing careers and childcare. The implications of these findings will be addressed and discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study relied on the assumption that communication is important for dual-career couples dealing with the transition to parenting and childcare needs. The study further anticipated that many participants would have experienced some form of a decision making process to determine how to manage their careers and childcare after the birth of the first child. The findings suggest that communication and discussion processes are important, but that these processes do not look alike. Furthermore, satisfaction reported by couples is often equally dependent on the partners' ability to identify their own expectations and advocate for their own needs as well as the quality of support systems in their lives. Expectations that these individuals had before becoming parents seemed to have a stronger impact on the arrangements of the couples that had less of a discussion process or were unable or unwilling to communicate their needs to their partner/spouse. Only two couples (33%) emphasized the discussion process as a primary part of how their arrangements for their childcare and careers were made. The individuals in these two couples both spoke of expectations, but also reported how discussion of these expectations and their needs allowed them to develop new, more manageable expectations. An additional two couples (another 33%) also reported high levels of discussion, but kept discussion to where the child would go to daycare (the assumption that the child would go to daycare was already made for the individuals). For some who did not emphasize a discussion process, they seemed to be uncovering their needs and

expectations for the first time during the interview. The processes that these couples underwent and continue to undergo resemble closely so many of the kinds of processes couples and couple's counselors negotiate throughout their entire relationships, yet the expectations and needs described by these parents were heightened due to the intensity of the experience of transition to parenthood and the implications for loss of self and autonomy as these parents became responsible for another being and to one another. The pertinence of this study to the needs of today's couples, parents, and therapists will be further discussed below in a comparison to earlier findings that were presented in the literature review.

#### *Comparison to Earlier Findings and Literature*

##### *Women In Paid Work And The Emergence Of Dual-Career Marriages*

The ease with which this researcher was able to recruit the six couples in this study suggests that dual-career couples are increasingly the norm. This study supports earlier literature which states that women consistently engaging in paid work continues to move from the exception to the norm in society (Reading and Amatea, 1986; Sayer, 2005).

##### *Trends in Dual-Career Couples' Parenthood and Childcare Choices*

The transition for dual-career couples into first-time parenthood has been widely shown to cause substantial challenges in managing multiple role commitments (Reading and Amatea, 1986; Cooney, 1993; Belsky, 1985). One male participant (in couple 3) spoke directly about the challenge of managing multiple roles, and explicitly stated that he would find it easier to be able to commit to one responsibility at a time.



I find it really difficult. Actually think that it would be easy if I could just say, 'ok I need to work all the time now to get my fulltime position and then I can lay off a little bit,' although you can't until you get tenure. Um, and I think it would be really easy, not easy to be a stay at home parent, but there would be a lot less conflict if I were a stay at home parent.

The finding from this participant's experience supports Belsky, Perry-Jenkins, and Crouter's study (1985), which emphasizes that work stresses influence marital communication and satisfaction, and that the inverse is true with family life influencing work life. The literature also suggests that the stress of managing multiple role commitments causes some individuals to decide to remain childless (Reading and Amatea, 1986; Orenstein, 2000), while others choose to delay parenting (Casademont, 2005; Orenstein, 2000; Cooney, Pedersen, Indelicato, and Palkovitz, 1993). The relationship conflict experienced by the male participant quoted above related to his desire to delay parenting even further, though he and his wife were in their early thirties at the time of the interview. "In the USA there is a very large increase of first births occurring to women aged 30 years and over from 5% in 1975 via 22% in 1995 to 28% in 2002" (Balen, 2005, p. 276). This male participants' desire to delay parenting further supports this trend and earlier findings that dual-career couples are choosing to delay parenting. Overall, the first-time parents in this study ranged in age from 25 to 42, with male partners ranging from 25 to 42 and women partners ranging from 25 to 34. Statistics from a 2004 National Vital Statistics Report reveal that "since 1990, national first birth rates have fallen for women under 30 years of age and increased for those aged 30 and over for all population groups" (Sutton and Matthews, 2004, p. 7). Additionally, in the U.S., "the average age of mothers at first birth increased steadily during the preceding 30 years, to 25.1 years in 2002, an all-time high for the nation" (CDC, 2005). Ages of

participants in this study support the finding that dual-career couples avoid the stress of multiple role commitments by delaying parenting, since the average age for participants was 31.75.

### *Evolving Gender Role Attitudes and Expectations*

As explained in the literature review, one manifestation of gender role expectations in partnerships is revealed through allocation of unpaid labor in the home. While there is evidence of change over the past 40 years toward more equal allocation of unpaid labor in the home, earlier findings indicate that inequalities in division of labor remain in current day families (Sayer, 2005). Table 2 in the chapter on findings illustrates the vast segregation of roles within the relationships of those interviewed, with 67% of men reported as the primary breadwinner and 75% of women reported as the primary childcare provider. The women in this study were more inclined than the men to have made career choices before parenthood to allow for flexibility in parenthood, which supports findings by Orenstein (2000) in which women “assumed that they would move in and out of the workforce and that family responsibilities would limit both their advancement and earning potential—but not their husbands’” (Orenstein, 2000, p.19).

Additionally, these findings reveal evidence to support the notion that women grapple with the pressure to be what Orenstein (2000) calls the “Good Mother,” as several female participants discussed their own internal pressure to be the caregiver. One mother (in couple 1) was very surprised by her own feelings, stating that this “Betty Crocker guilt” came out of nowhere. Expectations for fatherhood also caused struggles for a couple of men in the study, with these men feeling the desire and pressure to be more available as dads than their own fathers were, but to retain a focus on their careers.

Earlier findings suggest that these differing expectations create high work-life conflict for fathers (Roxburgh, 1999). This struggle seemed exacerbated in this study by unsupportive institutional supports and supervisors who expected fathers to be less involved in childcare. Nonetheless, the theme of “default parent” emerged as women in the study reported being the ones to initiate shared tasks and responsibilities.

### *Latent Power Dynamics In Marriage*

This study did not explore directly the characteristics of power dynamics in marriage or within unmarried couples, but, as anticipated, some responses related to power within the relationships of the couples interviewed. As reported in the findings regarding gender role expectations, one female participant (in couple 4) pushed within her relationship for a co-parenting arrangement that involved more than equal labor division. “I still want him to have more the feeling that he’s an equal partner. You know, it’s less ‘who does the work,’ it’s more like, ok, ‘who has the power of the decisions?’” Orenstein (2000), Tannen (1994), and Sayer (2005) write on the home as the domain where women have power and exercise authority, yet this participant’s statement revealed her own willingness and desire to give up “the power of the decisions” with her child in exchange for greater equality in her marriage. Other female participants spoke of not wanting to relinquish the prominent role in the home. Alternately, male participants spoke of the priority that their careers held (compared with their wives/partners) due to their breadwinner status. One male participant (in couple 5) did not even consider his wife’s work as a career, as it was a volunteer position, though she did provide \$14,000 income from her graduate funding. “Unfortunately, because of the bill issue, I have to consider mine as being career, because I’m getting paid for it and hers as being volunteer

work.” This distinction seemed to play into how decisions were made for whose career efforts took priority. Another male participant (in couple 1) spoke of investment in his wife’s career development several times, implying some mixed feelings about her “net drain” on the budget but the importance of that investment. The potential effect on power dynamics in relationships with one established partner and one partner in career development would be good material for future research.

#### *The Role Of Support Systems In Childcare Choices*

Previous research regarding parents indicates the importance of support systems for couples (Lee and Duxbury, 2001; Curran et al, 2006). This study provides further support for that finding. Family and work supports evolved in this study to become the most prominently reported on, along with the responses about spousal support that emerged from questions directed at the couples’ relationships. Couples with access to tangible or emotional family supports reported its importance, while couples without family support reported that it would be helpful to have. Particular to this study was the emphasis that participants placed on work supports in the form of the social support they experienced from having coworkers and supervisors who respected and supported their parent status.

#### *Comments on Findings*

Several areas emerged within the findings that warranted further discussion, namely a contradiction between opposing expectations held by interviewees, the importance of role models, and best practices and recommendations identified by the couples interviewed.

### *Contradictory Expectations for Gender Role Divisions and Equal Role Divisions*

Some participant responses raised the notion that today's generation of new parents is confused by contradictory expectations: One expectation is that society has achieved more equal sharing in parenting tasks and responsibilities and more equal opportunity for career development for both men and women; which is in contradiction with expectations that new parents have for themselves based on their experiences of their parents' gender roles. As one participant (in couple 5) put it, feminism and the media made her believe that her husband would be a more involved parent, yet she fully expected still to be a stay at home mom, and her report of her husband's expectations did not include his being an involved parent. Ten out of twelve participants (83%) identified their own parents as having traditional gender role divisions (father as breadwinner, mother as caregiver)—the other two participants reported having a mother who “did everything.” Within their own relationships, nine out of twelve parents who were interviewed (75%) reported that the female partner was the primary childcare provider; and eight out of twelve parents (67%) identified the male partner as the primary breadwinner (though all participants reported contributing to some portion of the household income). Several participants reported an expectation of themselves that they would engage in more equal role divisions, yet they fell back on gender roles in most instances. This contradiction raises the point that perhaps this current generation of new parents is facing even greater stress from two opposing expectations of themselves as parents and professionals.

### *Importance of Role Models and Institutional Supports*

Participants most frequently reported good work support by describing co-workers or supervisors who had children and had both parents working. Having dual-career role models within the work environment correlated strongly with positive feelings about work support. In many cases, the work environments that participants described as having a high number of dual-career parents as co-workers were also work places that offered institutional supports such as on-site daycare or flexible leave policies that allowed parents to leave work when necessary to juggle childcare.

### *Best Practices and Recommendations*

The participants were asked how they felt about their arrangements and how they experienced that their wants and needs were considered or not considered during the process they shared with their partner to come to their arrangements. As part of this question, participants had the option to report what they felt contributed to them feeling good about their process or what would have helped them to feel better about it. Six out of twelve participants (50%) offered thoughts on what they felt helped or would have helped them through this process. The remaining six participants answered this question indirectly through stating what influenced their satisfaction and what worked for them.

### *Work supports*

Participants who reported on what worked well for them with work supports, or what would have worked better, reported that having a “compassionate boss” who supports having family commitments outside of work as well as having a company philosophy that supports work/life balance would have been most helpful. “I think company policies should be built around [work/life balance] really.”

### *Family support*

As this study's findings revealed, seven out of 12 respondents (58%) emphasized support they had received from family in the form of babysitting and physically helping out during difficult times, while 4 of the 12 participants (33%) emphasized emotional support as important from their families. For those parents that did not have access to family support, some felt this would have helped them. When asked what would have helped her through this process, one female participant stated, "I think having more family around."

### *Talking more*

Several participants reported that they felt it would have helped them to talk more with their partners through out this transition to parenthood. One wife (in couple 3) stated, "And I think maybe we could have talked about that a little bit more." Her husband reported similarly, "I think, just having a lot more serious discussions, just more planning, even if you can't really plan for that, you know just talking about it more would have helped that process." Along similar lines, another female participant (in couple 5) reported that being clearer about when she needed help would have made this process better for her.

So when I looked at other mothers that had more success at getting their husbands involved with their children when they were babies, um, you know, I think that they had to be, most of them, not everyone, but a lot of women had to be like, 'I need you to do this. I need you to that.'

This same participant recommended that not just communicating her needs would have helped, but being able to identify them and then share them non-critically. "[It would

have helped] if I would have found a way to talk about it that would be in a non-critical way....To talk about my needs.”

*Thinking critically about possible obstacles*

Many of the participants sought to have more equal role divisions in their partnerships, and one participant (couple 3) reported that it would have helped to think critically about how a “let’s be equal” philosophy would be challenged down the line.

Instead of just being like, ‘Yeah, let’s be equal!’ without like really critically thinking, ‘Yeah, let’s be equal, but given these hardships, what are we going to do about that?’ Maybe we could have thought about it a little more.

This same mother connects this challenge to developing the role of “default parent” below.

*Disabling the default parent role*

As reported in the findings chapter, many parents addressed the issue of the mother becoming the “default parent.” In responding to this question about what would have helped her, one mother (in couple 3) stated, “I think I could have done a little more earlier to not be the default parent.” She emphasized that it may have helped her and her husband to critically consider:

‘These are scenarios: One that he’s going to prefer being with the mom because you nurse him all the time and he’s used to you—that even given these hurdles, like maybe a little bit more objectively, like, what should we do to split roles?’

Another mother (in couple 5) also reported receiving advice on this matter herself, but that it was

Um, and to also be able to do what everyone kind of told me to do beforehand was to let the father do it and do it his way, which in most cases was not a problem, but there were, like, when the baby was crying and crying and what he was doing wasn’t working, it was very hard to let him do it his way....[But this was important so that] the father would create his own relationship with the child.



### *Flexibility*

One theme that arose for parents who reported satisfaction with their arrangements was a flexible approach in responding to changing needs. Additionally, one parent (in couple 3) emphasized being patient in responding to one's own feelings about the transition to daycare, should parents choose that option.

[If] I knew somebody doing this again, I would tell them, like, definitely withhold judgment on your childcare situation until you've had time to settle in, because clearly it's going to be hard to go from you being home with him to leaving him in daycare, and then it's not just that, it's also, you don't even know his teachers, they don't know your kid. It's really; those first few weeks are really hard, you know. We were really, like, we were concerned. We were, like, 'We don't even know if it's a good daycare.' Now we love it, and we love his teachers. He's excited to see them, and so I think it's just, you can't rush to judgment.

Other parents reported approaches such as, "give it a try" or "change it on the go" and resisted rushing to judgment about what they would need as parents and professionals. Perhaps this advice could allow more new parents to be compassionate with themselves as they newly navigate multiple role commitments.

### *Limitations and Future Research Possibilities*

Limitations to the transferability and generalizability of findings generated by this qualitative study include a limited sample size, a snowball sampling method, and participant bias, as all had expressed an interest in improved decision-making and communication processes with their partners. The generalizability is further limited based on the characteristics of the sample being limited to the location in which recruitment efforts were undertaken (Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill of North Carolina). It is difficult to know the exact reasons why potentially qualified participants declined to respond to recruitment efforts. As with any parent managing the balance of new childcare and work

responsibilities, they may have felt that they did not have the time or flexibility in their schedules to participate in the study. Also some may not have received the information via email or come across a flyer in one of the public locations where they were posted. Aside from the practical reasons, there may have been specific and intentional reasons why some couples did not chose to participate. Some may have felt that the topic was too fraught with conflict or was a private matter, not to be discussed with a researcher. As a result, because there is no way to know these reasons for certain, it is difficult to determine differences between those that responded and those did not; due to this and the limited sample size, the current sample cannot be considered representative of the population as a whole.

Another limitation centers on the analysis and interpretation of the data by the researcher. My own proximity to a life phase involving the challenges with career and impending parenthood was a source of possible bias in this study. I am not a parent but am recently married and contemplating how to navigate career and childcare responsibilities should I become a parent in the near future. This bias from my own life experience led me to believe that couples undergo a process involving power and gender dynamics, communication and expectations that evolves toward a compromise when they have a first child. While I tried to be as neutral as possible when analyzing the data, some biases may have affected the process, in particular to the themes I identified in the findings. In an effort to reduce the effect of my own bias on the research study, I utilized a second reader to review the accuracy of the themes I identified from the transcripts.

This project aimed to explore and document the experiences of dual-career couples undergoing first-time parenthood, with the hope that it may guide larger, future

studies on the changing social, political, and financial landscapes these couples exist in. Future research is needed on how gender role expectations and power dynamics are evolving in couples due to shifts in breadwinner status from a masculine role toward a less gender-specific role within families. Notable within this study, the participants reported low levels of conflict overall, which leads this researcher to question whether the time period being reported on was too far in hindsight to illicit a more detailed response, whether the individuals minimized descriptions of conflict, or if conflict may have been too strong of a word. Perhaps future studies would benefit from exploring different responses to inquiries about “tension” or “differences of opinion,” or consider limiting the sample to individuals going through the earliest months of new parenthood.

Another area that would benefit from future studies is the effect of evolving breadwinner roles on money and power dynamics for new parents in dual-career partnerships. Vogler (1998) states,

The clash between traditional patriarchal discourses of breadwinning and contemporary discourses of equality and individualism may therefore be coming to play a pivotal role, especially in households where husbands and wives are both contributing similar levels of economic resources (p. 707).

Increasingly, as male and female partners more commonly contribute “similar levels of economic resources” within their dual-career partnerships, research is developing on how couples organize money within the household (Vogler, 2005). Nonetheless, further research is needed on the money and power dynamics for dual-career couples transitioning into parenthood and facing decisions about their careers and income.

### *Implications for Social Work Practice and Couples*

The findings of this research study provide several implications for social work practice and for couples facing or dealing with this life transition. Interestingly, due to some similarities among the participants in the study, namely income and profession (a large portion of the sample reported on work life in academia), the study has implications for social workers working with this population or for couples who fit within the salary ranges and occupations of those interviewed here. Four of the twelve participants in this study were building careers in academia. Additionally, the presentation of narrative data was done, in part, to instigate reflection by couples or couples' therapists on couples' expectations, needs, role models, support systems, and power dynamics. Hopefully, these findings can encourage discussion and reflection where they are needed to facilitate the move into parenthood for dual-career couples.

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Appendix A

Table 11: Participant Characteristics

	Couple	Sex of Parent	Age of Baby	Career Status	In Academia	Returned to Work/School Immediately (within 3 weeks)	Returned to Work/School Later (between 3 weeks - 6 months)	Reported Financial Constraints	Levels of Family Support Reported		Levels of Social Support Reported		Levels of Work Support Reported		Reported Use of Paid Childcare
									Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	
1	F	16 mo.	Early Development				X (6 mo.)			X	X		X		In-home babysitter (part-time)
1	M	16 mo.	Very Established			X			X (his family)	X (wife's family)	X			X	In-home babysitter (part-time)
2	F	6 mo.	Early Development				X (6 wks.)	X		X	X		X		Independent childcare provider (full-time)
2	M	6 mo.	Moderately Established			X				X	(no report)			X	Independent childcare provider (full-time)
3	F	7 mo.	Established				X (10 wks.)			X		X		X	Daycare center (full-time)
3	M	7 mo.	Early Development	X		X				X		X			Daycare center (full-time)
4	F	17 mo.	Established				X (3 mo.)		X		X			X	Daycare center (full-time)
4	M	17 mo.	Early Development	X		X			X		X				Daycare center (full-time)
5	F	11 mo.	In School			X		X			X			X	
5	M	11 mo.	Established			X		X			X				
6	F	6 mo.	Early Development	X			X (9 mo.)			X	X		X		
6	M	6 mo.	Early Development	X		X				X	X		X		

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent Letter

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

My name is Amelia Hube. I am an MSW candidate at Smith College School for Social Work. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for this degree, I am conducting a research study as part of my thesis project and for possible future presentation and publication. The focus of my research is to explore the experiences of couples that have gone through a process to balance each partner's career needs and the new childcare responsibilities as they approached first time parenthood.

I will be confidentially interviewing couples with a first (and only) child between the ages of 6-24 months who live together and both have careers (whether they are actively engaging in professional work currently or not). The interview will take approximately 1 hour to complete and will be audio recorded for later transcription by myself or a transcriber.

There may be possible risks in participating in this study, which may include: emotional discomfort, mild depression, or relationship conflict. In the event that this occurs and you would like to speak with someone, a list of local therapists and referral sources that offer names of other professional therapists in your area is provided. Some may offer reduced rates, if needed.

Your participation in this study would add knowledge to the field of social work and family therapy. Little conclusive research exists about the process that couples go through before the birth of a first child as they navigate decisions to balance career and childcare choices. Your efforts would allow many professionals to better understand their clients and to provide more effective therapy. Additionally, your participation may help you to clarify the process you and your partner went through and make changes if needed to your current arrangements. Compensation will not be provided in exchange for participation in this study.

The information that you provided will be handled with sensitivity and the highest level of confidentiality. Those that have access to the interview data are my research advisor, myself, a second reader who is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with interest in this subject matter, and possibly a transcriber. Both the second reader and a transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement before receiving any data from this research project. All identifying material will be carefully disguised or omitted. Confidentiality and anonymity will also be maintained in any publications that may result from this research. All data will be safeguarded in a locked environment for a period of three years, as required by Federal guidelines. After the three years, all data will be destroyed when no longer needed.



Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any of the questions. You may also choose to withdraw your involvement in this study at any point prior to April 1, 2007. Please feel free to contact me at any time with questions. I am best reached by email at parents.study@gmail.com, but you may also contact me by phone at (919) 794-4794.

**YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY. ADDITIONALLY, I SUGGEST THAT YOU KEEP A COPY OF THIS CONSENT LETTER FOR YOUR PERSONAL FILES.**

Sincerely,

Amelia Hube

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Interview Question Guide

1. How have you balanced your career, your partner's career and childcare?
  - a. Who is the primary childcare provider? Primary breadwinner?
  - b. Do you feel one partner compromised more to come to the arrangement you have? If so, can you explain?
2. How did you and your partner come to that arrangement?
  - a. What was the decision making process?
  - b. Were there unspoken expectations about how work commitments would change for each partner when the child was born? If so, what were they?  
After the initial postpartum recovery period?
  - c. How would you describe any conflict you and your partner experienced in deciding how to manage careers and childcare?
3. What factors influenced the arrangement you came to?
  - a. How did each of your work situations influence your decision for who would be responsible for childcare?
  - b. How would you describe your role models for parenting or career building?
  - c. How did your parents divide work and family responsibilities?
  - d. How did your partner's parents divide work and family responsibilities?
  - e. How would you describe family, social or work support systems for your decisions for childcare arrangements?

- i. (optional follow-up question): If you're family/friends/co-workers were unsupportive, how do you feel this may have to do with differences in gender role expectations?
4. How do you feel that your wants and needs were adequately or inadequately considered in the process?
  - a. If so, what contributed to this?
  - b. If not, what would have helped?
5. How do you feel satisfied or unsatisfied with the decision that you came to?
6. If a change needed to take place from the original decision/arrangement, why did that need to take place?
7. What is your age?
8. What is your gender?
9. How do you identify racially or ethnically?
10. What is your religious affiliation, if any?
11. What is your sexual orientation?
12. What is your occupation?
13. What is your approximate annual salary?

## Appendix D

### Recruitment Ad on a Listserv

#### COUPLES:

Have you had to balance career and childcare choices?

Are you first-time parents of a 6-24 month old only child?

If the answers are yes, you are eligible to participate in a research study examining the experiences of dual-career couples as they approached the birth of a first child.

Participants will be required to sign a consent form and participate in an interview. Total participation time is approximately 1 hour for each individual in the couple.

The study is being conducted by a candidate for the degree of MSW, studying at Smith College School for Social Work.

Participation in this study will offer an opportunity to contribute to clinical social workers knowledge and ability to aid couples through this often-challenging process.

If you are interested in participation or would like more information, please contact Amelia:

Phone: 919-794-4794

Email: [parents.study@gmail.com](mailto:parents.study@gmail.com)

## Appendix E

### Human Subjects Review Committee Approval Letter

November 2, 2006

Amelia Hube  
1400 Glendale Avenue  
Durham, NC 27701

Dear Amelia,

I'm so glad you called. I did find your email, which I had missed. All is now in order and I am happy to give final approval to your study.

*Please note the following requirements:*

**Consent Forms:** All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

**Maintaining Data:** You must retain signed consent documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

*In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:*

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

**Renewal:** You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

**Completion:** You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your interesting project.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.  
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Jay Williams, Research Advisor

## Appendix F

### Second Reader's Assurance of Research Confidentiality

#### **STATEMENT OF POLICY:**

This thesis project is firmly committed to the principle that research confidentiality must be protected. This principle holds whether or not any specific guarantee of confidentiality was given by respondents at the time of the interview. When guarantees have been given, they may impose additional requirements which are to be adhered to strictly.

#### **PROCEDURES FOR MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY:**

- A second reader for this project shall sign this assurance of confidentiality.
- A second reader should be aware that the identity of participants in research studies is confidential information, as are identifying information about participants and individual responses to questions. Depending on the study, the organizations participating in the study, the geographical location of the study, the method of participant recruitment, the subject matter of the study, and the hypotheses being tested may also be confidential information. Specific research findings and conclusions are also usually confidential until they have been published or presented in public.

It is incumbent on the second reader to treat information from and about research as privileged information, to be aware of what is confidential in regard to specific studies on which they work or about which they have knowledge, and to preserve the confidentiality of this information. Types of situations where confidentiality can often be compromised include conversations with friends and relatives, conversations with professional colleagues outside the project team, conversations with reporters and the media, and in the use of consultants for computer programs and data analysis.

- Unless specifically instructed otherwise, a second reader, upon encountering a respondent or information pertaining to a respondent that s/he knows personally, shall not disclose any knowledge of the respondent or any information pertaining to the respondent's testimony or his participation in this thesis project. In other words, second readers should not reveal any information or knowledge about or pertaining to a respondent's participation in this project.
- Data containing personal identifiers shall be kept in a locked container or a locked room when not being used each working day in routine activities. Reasonable caution shall be exercised in limiting access to data to only those persons who are working on this thesis project and who have been instructed in

the applicable confidentiality requirements for the project.

- The researcher for this project, Amelia Hube, shall be responsible for ensuring that the second reader involved in handling data is instructed in these procedures, has signed this pledge, and complies with these procedures throughout the duration of the project. At the end of the project, Amelia Hube shall arrange for proper storage or disposition of data, in accordance with federal guidelines and Human Subjects Review Committee policies at the Smith College School for Social Work.
- Amelia Hube must ensure that procedures are established in this study to inform each respondent of the authority for the study, the purpose and use of the study, the voluntary nature of the study (where applicable), and the effects on the respondents, if any, of not responding.

**PLEDGE**

I hereby certify that I have carefully read and will cooperate fully with the above procedures. I will maintain the confidentiality of confidential information from all studies with which I have involvement. I will not discuss, disclose, disseminate, or provide access to such information, except directly to the researcher, Amelia Hube, for this project. I understand that violation of this pledge is sufficient grounds for disciplinary action, including termination of services with the project, and may make me subject to criminal or civil penalties. I give my personal pledge that I shall abide by this assurance of confidentiality.

_____	Signature
_____	Date
_____	Researcher, Amelia Hube
_____	Date

Appendix G

Recruitment Flyer

**COUPLES:**

**Have you had to balance career and childcare choices?**

**Are you first-time parents of a 6-24 month old only child?**

**If the answers are yes, you are eligible to participate in a research study examining the experiences of dual-career couples as they approached the birth of a first child. Participants will be required to sign a consent form and participate in an interview. Total participation time is approximately 1 hour for each individual in the couple.**

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