

8. A few researchers argue that, since the majority of men who batter their wives are gainfully employed, unemployment is of little value in explaining battering (H. Saville et al., "Sex Roles, Inequality and Spouse Abuse," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 17 [1981]: 83-88; and Martin D. Schwartz, "Work Status, Resource Equality, Injury and Wife Battery," *Creative Sociology* 18 [1990]: 57-61). But the evidence is much stronger in the direction of a relationship between unemployment and family violence; see Frances J. Fitch and Andre Papanonio, "Men Who Batter," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 171 (1983): 190-91; Richard J. Gelles and Murray A. Straus, "Violence in the American Family," *Journal of Social Issues* 35 (1979): 15-39; New York State Task Force on Domestic Violence, *Domestic Violence: Report to the Governor and Legislature: Families and Change* (New York: Praeger, 1984); and Suzanne K. Steinmetz, "Violence-Prone Families," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 347 (1980): 251-65.
9. John A. Byles, "Violence, Alcohol Problems and Other Problems in Disintegrating Families," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 39 (1978): 551-53; Ronald W. Fagan, Ola W. Barnett, and John B. Patton, "Reasons for Alcohol Use in Maritally Violent Men," *Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* 14 (1988): 371-92; Fitch and Papanonio, "Men Who Batter"; Kenneth E. Leonard et al., "Patterns of Alcohol Use and Physically Aggressive Behavior in Men," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 46 (1985): 279-82; Larry R. Livingston, "Measuring Domestic Violence in an Alcoholic Population," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 13 (1986): 934-51; Albert R. Roberts, "Substance Abuse among Men Who Batter Their Mates," *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 5 (1988): 83-87; J. M. Schuergler and N. Reigle, "Personality and Biographic Data That Characterize Men Who Abuse Their Wives," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 44 (1988): 75-81; and Steinmetz, "Violence-prone Families."
10. Reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 14, 1992. The study found that in the same year that unemployment rose from 6.5 to 9.2 percent, there was a 30 percent increase in the number of couples seeking advice from marriage counselors about their waning sex lives.
11. Ethel Spector Person, "Sexuality as the Mainstay of Identity," *Signs* 5 (1980): 605-30.
12. An article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 19, 1992, surveyed several recent studies of divorce, one of which found that when income drops 25 percent, divorce rises by more than 10 percent; another predicted ten thousand divorces for every 1 percent rise in unemployment.
13. Cited in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 19, 1992.
14. Unemployment benefits vary from state to state. In California, a state where benefits are among the most generous, the range is \$40-230 a week for a maximum of twenty-six weeks. How much a person actually collects depends upon how long she worked and how much she earned. Even at the highest benefit level, available only to workers who have worked steadily at one of the relatively well-paid blue-collar jobs, the income loss is staggering. For workers in the lower-level jobs, for those who worked intermittently through no fault of their own, or for those who depended on the underground economy to supplement their meager wages, benefits can be so small as to be relatively meaningless.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF FAMILY WORK

Chicano Men and Housework

SCOTT COLTRANE

Scott Coltrane completed his Ph.D. in sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He currently serves as director of the graduate program and associate professor of sociology at the University of California, Riverside. His research on gender and families has appeared in various scholarly journals and edited collections. He is co-author, with Randall Collins, of *Sociology of Marriage and the Family* (1995) and author of *Gender and Families* (1997). His book *Family Man: Fatherhood, Housework, and Gender Equity* (1996), which is excerpted here, received the American Library Association's CHOICE award as one of the Outstanding Academic Books of 1996. In the following selection, Coltrane examines the division of domestic labor and the resulting power dynamics in Chicano households. Building on the research done by Jessie Bernard on the "good-provider role" and on Arlie Hochschild's concept of the "economy of gratitude," Coltrane finds that Chicano couples see the meaning of housework and individual responsibility for it as dependent on how the couple views gender roles and whether the wife works full-time outside of the home.

One of the most popular pejorative American slang terms to emerge in the 1980s was "macho," used to describe men prone to combative posturing, relentless sexual conquest, and other compulsive displays of masculinity. Macho men continually guard against imputations of being soft or feminine and thus tend to avoid domestic tasks and family activities that are considered "women's work." Macho comes from the Spanish *machismo*, and although the behaviors associated with it are clearly not limited to one ethnic group, Latino men are often stereotyped as especially prone toward macho displays.¹ This chapter uses in-depth interviews with twenty Chicano couples to explore how paid work and family work are divided. As in other contemporary American households, divisions of labor in these Chicano families were far from balanced or egalitarian, and husbands tended to enjoy special privileges simply because they were men. Nevertheless, many couples were allocating household chores without reference to gender, and few of the Chicano men exhibited stereotypical macho behavior.

Chicanos, or Mexican Americans, are often portrayed as living in poor farm-worker families composed of macho men, subservient women, and plentiful children. Yet these stereotypes have been changing, as diverse groups of people with Mexican and Latin American heritage are responding to the

same sorts of social and economic pressures faced by families of other ethnic backgrounds. For example, most Chicano families in the United States now live in urban centers or their suburbs rather than in traditional rural farming areas, and their patterns of marital interaction appear to be about as egalitarian as those of other American families. What's more, Chicanos will no longer be a numerical minority in the near future. Because of higher-than-average birth rates and continued in-migration, by the year 2015 Chicano children will outnumber Anglos in many southwest states, including California, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico.²

When family researchers study white couples, they typically focus on middle-class suburban households, usually highlighting their strengths. Studies of ethnic minority families, in contrast, have tended to focus on the problems of poor or working-class households living in inner-city or rural settings. Because most research on Latino families in the United States has not controlled for social class, wife's employment status, or recency of immigration, a narrow and stereotyped view of these families as patriarchal and culturally backward has persisted. In addition, large-scale studies of "Hispanics" have failed to distinguish between divergent groups of people with Mexican, Central American, South American, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Spanish, or Portuguese ancestry. In contrast, contemporary scholars are beginning to look at some of the positive aspects of minority families and to focus on the economic and institutional factors that influence men's lives within these families.³

In 1990 and 1991, Elsa Valdez and I interviewed a group of twenty middle-class Chicano couples with young children living in Southern California. We were primarily interested in finding out if they were facing the same sorts of pressures experienced by other families, so we selected only families in which both the husband and the wife were employed outside the home—the most typical pattern among young parents in the United States today. We wanted to see who did what in these families and find out how they talked about the personal and financial pushes and pulls associated with raising a family. We interviewed wives and husbands separately in their homes, asking them a variety of questions about housework, child care, and their jobs. Elsewhere, we describe details of their time use and task performance, but here I analyze the couples' talk about work, family, and gender, exploring how feelings of entitlement and obligation are shaped by patterns of paid and unpaid labor.⁴

When we asked husbands and wives to sort sixty-four common household tasks according to who most often performed them, we found that wives in most families were responsible for housecleaning, clothes care, meal preparation, and clean-up, whereas husbands were primarily responsible for home maintenance and repair. Most routine child care was also performed by wives, though most husbands reported that they made substantial contributions to parenting. Wives saw the mundane daily housework as an ever-present burden that they had to shoulder themselves or delegate to someone

else. While many wives did not expect the current division of labor to change, they did acknowledge that it was unbalanced. The men, although acknowledging that things weren't exactly fair, tended to minimize the asymmetry by seeing many of the short repetitive tasks associated with housekeeping as shared activities. Although there was tremendous diversity among the couples we talked to, we observed a general pattern of disagreement over how much family work the other spouse performed.

The sociologist Jessie Bernard provides us with a useful way to understand why this might be. Bernard suggested that every marital union contains two marriages—"his" and "hers."⁵ We discovered from our interviews and observations that most of the husbands and wives were, indeed, living in separate marriages or separate worlds. Her world centered around keeping track of the countless details of housework and child care even though she was employed. His world centered around his work and his leisure activities so that he avoided noticing or anticipating the details of running a home. Husbands "helped out" when wives gave them tasks to do, and because they almost always complied with requests for help, most tended to assume that they were sharing the household labor. Because much of the work the women did was unseen or taken for granted by the men, they tended to underestimate their wives' contributions and escaped the full range of tensions and strains associated with family work.

Because wives remained in control of setting schedules, generating lists for domestic chores, and worrying about the children, they perceived their husbands as contributing relatively little. A frequent comment from wives was that their husbands "just didn't see" the domestic details, and that the men would not often take responsibility for anticipating and planning for what needed to be done. Although many of the men we interviewed maintained their favored position within the family by "not seeing" various aspects of domestic life and leaving the details and planning to their wives, other couples were in the process of ongoing negotiations and, as described below, were successful at redefining some household chores as shared endeavors.

Concerning their paid work, the families we interviewed reported that both husbands and wives had jobs because of financial necessity. The men made comments like, "we were pretty much forced into it," or "we didn't really have any choice." Although most of the husbands and wives were employed full-time, only a few accepted the wife as an equal provider or true breadwinner. Using the type of job, employment schedule, and earnings of each spouse, along with their attitudes toward providing, I categorized the couples into main-provider families and co-provider families.⁶ Main-provider couples considered the husband's job to be primary and the wife's job to be secondary. Co-provider couples in contrast, tended to accept the wife's job as permanent, and some even treated the wife's job as equally important to her husband's. Accepting the wife as an equal provider, or considering the husband to have failed as a provider, significantly shaped the couples' divisions of household labor.

Main-Provider Families

In just under half of the families we interviewed, the men earned substantially more money than their wives and were assumed to be "natural" breadwinners, whereas the women were assumed to be innately better equipped to deal with home and children. Wives in all of these main-provider families were employed, but the wife's job was often considered temporary, and her income was treated as "extra" money and earmarked for special purposes.⁷ One main-provider husband said, "I would prefer that my wife did not have to work, and could stay at home with my daughter, but finances just don't permit that." Another commented that his wife made just about enough to cover the costs of child care, suggesting that the children were still her primary responsibility, and that any wages she earned should first be allocated to cover "her" tasks.

The main-provider couples included many wives who were employed part-time, and some who worked in lower-status full-time jobs with wages much lower than their husband's. These women took pride in their homemaker role and readily accepted responsibility for managing the household, although they occasionally asked for help. One part-time bookkeeper married to a recent law-school graduate described their division of labor by saying, "It's a given that I take care of children and housework, but when I am real tired, he steps in willingly." Main-provider husbands typically remained in a helper role: in this case, the law clerk told his wife, "Just tell me what to do and I'll do it." He said that if he came home and she was gone, he might clean house, but that if she was home, he would "let her do it." This reflects a typical division of labor in which the wife acts as household manager and the husband occasionally serves as her helper.⁸

This lawyer-to-be talked about early negotiations between he and his wife that seemed to set the tone for current smoldering arguments about housework:

When we were first married, I would do something and she wouldn't like the way I did it. So I would say, "OK, then, you do it, and I won't do it again." That was like in our first few years of marriage when we were first getting used to each other, but now she doesn't discourage me so much. She knows that if she does, she's going to wind-up doing it herself.

His resistance and her reluctance to press for change reflect an unbalanced economy of gratitude.⁹ When he occasionally contributed to housework or child care, she was indebted to him. She complimented him for being willing to step in when she asked for help, but privately lamented the fact that she had to negotiate for each small contribution. Firmly entrenched in the main-provider role and somewhat oblivious to the daily rituals of housework and child care, he felt justified in needing prodding and encouragement. When she did ask him for help, she was careful to thank him for dressing the children or for giving her a ten-minute break from them. While these patterns of domestic labor and inequities in the exchange of gratitude

*Substantiated
domestic
gratitude*

were long-standing, tension lurked just below the surface for this couple. He commented, "My wife gets uptight with me for agreeing to help out my mom, when she feels she can't even ask me to go to the store for her."

In general, wives of main-providers not only performed virtually all housework and child care, but both spouses accepted this as "natural" or "normal." Main-provider husbands assumed that financial support was their "job" or their "duty." When one man was asked about how it felt to make more money than his wife, he responded by saying: "It's my job, I wouldn't feel right if I didn't make more money. . . . Any way that I look at it, I have to keep up my salary, or I'm not doing my job. If it costs \$40,000 to live nowadays and I'm not in a \$40,000-a-year job, then I'm not gonna be happy."

This same husband, a head mechanic who worked between 50 and 60 hours per week, also showed how main-provider husbands sometimes felt threatened when women begin asserting themselves in previously all-male occupational enclaves:

As long as women mind their own business, no problem with me. . . . There's nothing wrong with them being in the job, but they shouldn't try to do more than that. Like, if you get a secretary that's nosy and wants to run the company, hey, well, we tell her where to stick it. . . . When you can't do my job, don't tell me how to do it.

The mechanic's wife, also a part-time teacher's aide, subtly resisted by "spending as little time on housework as I can get away with." Nevertheless, she still considered it her sole duty to cook, and only when her husband was away at National Guard training sessions did she feel she could "slack off" by not placing "regular meals" on the family's table each night.

The Provider Role and Failed Aspirations

Wives performed most of the household labor in main-provider couples, but if main-provider husbands had failed career aspirations, more domestic work was shared. What appeared to tip the economy of gratitude away from automatic male privilege was the wife's sense that the husband had not fulfilled his occupational potential. For example, one main-provider husband graduated from a four-year college and completed two years of post-graduate study without finishing his Master's Thesis. At the time of the interview, he was making about \$30,000 a year as a self-employed house painter, and his wife was making less than half that amount as a full-time secretary. His comments show how her evaluation of his failed or postponed career aspirations led to more bargaining over his participation in routine housework:

She reminds me that I'm not doing what we both think I should be doing, and sometimes that's a discouragement. I might have worked a lot of

hours, and I'll come home tired, for example, and she'll say, "You've gotta clean the house," and I'll say, "Damn I'm tired, I'd like to get a little rest in," but she says "you're only doing this because it's been your choice." She tends to not have sympathy for me in my work because it was more my choice than hers.

He acknowledged that he should be doing something more "worthwhile," and hoped that he would not be painting houses for more than another year. Still, as long as he stayed in his current job, considered beneath him by both of them, she would not allow him to use fatigue from employment as a way to get out of doing housework:

I worked about 60 hours a week the last couple of weeks. I worked yesterday [Saturday], and today—if it had been my choice—I would have drank beer and watched TV. But since she had a baby shower to go to, I babysitted my nephews. And since we had you coming, she kind of laid out the program: "You've gotta clean the floors, and wash the dishes and do the carpets. So get to it buddy!" [Laughs.]

This main-provider husband capitulated to his wife's demands, but she still had to set tasks for him and remind him to perform them. In responding to her "program," he used the strategy of claimed incompetence that other main-provider husbands also used. While he admitted that he was proficient at the "janitorial stuff," he was careful to point out that he was incapable of dusting or doing the laundry:

It's amazing what you can do when you have little time and you just get in and do it. And I'm good at that. I'm good at the big cleaning, I'm good at the janitorial stuff. I can do the carpet, do the floors, do all that stuff. But I'm no good on the details. She wants all the details just right, so she handles dusting, the laundry, and stuff like that. . . . You know, like I would have everything come out one color.

By re-categorizing some of the housework as "big cleaning" this husband rendered it accountable as men's work. He drew the line at laundry and dusting, but he had transformed some household tasks, like vacuuming and mopping, into work appropriate for men to do. He was complying, albeit reluctantly, to many of his wife's requests because they agreed that he had not fulfilled "his" job as sole provider. He still yearned to be the "real" breadwinner and shared his hope that getting a better paying job would mean that he could ignore the housework:

Sharing the house stuff is usually just a necessity. If, as we would hope in the future, she didn't have to work outside the home, then I think I would be comfortable doing less of it. Then she would be the primary house-care person and I would be the primary financial-resource person. I think roles would change then, and I would be comfortable with her doing more of the dishes and more of the cleaning, and I think she would too. In that sense, I think traditional relationships—if traditional means

the guy working and the woman staying home—is a good thing. I wouldn't mind getting a taste of it myself!

Another main-provider husband held a job as a telephone lineman, and his wife ran a family day-care center out of their home, which earned her less than a third of what he made. She talked about her regrets that he didn't do something "more important" for a living, and he talked about her frequent reminders that he was "too smart for what I'm doing." Like the other failed-aspirations husbands, he made significant contributions to domestic chores, but his resentment showed when he talked about "the wife" holding a job far from home:

What I didn't like about it was that I used to get home before the wife, because she had to commute, and I'd have to pop something to eat. Most of the time it was just whatever I happened to find in the fridge. Then I'd have to go pick up the kids immediately from the babysitter, and sometimes I had evening things to do, so what I didn't like was that I had to figure out a way to schedule baby watch or baby sitting.

Even when main-provider husbands began to assume responsibility for domestic work in response to "necessity" or "nagging," they seemed to cling to the idea that these were still "her" chores. Coincidentally, most of the secondary-provider wives reported that they received little help unless they "constantly" reminded their husbands. What generally kept secondary-provider wives from resenting their husband's resistance was their own acceptance of the homemaker role and their recognition of his superior financial contributions. When performance of the male-provider role was deemed to be lacking in some way—i.e., failed aspirations or low occupational prestige—wives' resentment appeared closer to the surface, and they were more persistent in demanding help from their husbands.

Ambivalent Co-Providers

Over half of the couples we interviewed were classified as co-providers. The husbands and wives in these families had more equal earnings and placed a higher value on the wife's employment than those in main-provider families, but there was considerable variation in terms of their willingness to accept the woman as a full and equal provider. Five of the twelve husbands in the co-provider group were ambivalent about sharing the provider role and were also reluctant to share most household tasks. Compared to their wives, ambivalent co-provider husbands usually held jobs that were roughly equivalent in terms of occupational prestige and worked about the same number of hours per week, but because of gender bias in the labor market, the men earned significantly more than their wives. Compared to main-provider husbands, they considered their wives' jobs to be relatively permanent and

important, but they continued to use their own job commitments as justification for doing little at home. Ambivalent co-provider husbands' family obligations rarely intruded into their work lives, whereas their wives' family obligations frequently interfered with their paid work. Such asymmetrically permeable work/family boundaries are common in single-earner and main-provider families, but must be supported with subtle ideologies and elaborate justifications when husbands and wives hold similar occupational positions.¹⁰

Ambivalent co-provider husbands remained in a helper role at home, perceiving their wives to be more involved parents and assuming that housework was also primarily their wives' responsibility. The men used their jobs to justify their absence from home, but most also lamented not being able to spend more time with their families. . . .

Not surprisingly, ambivalent co-provider husbands tended to be satisfied with their current divisions of labor, even though they usually admitted that things were "not quite fair." One junior-high-school teacher married to a bilingual-education program coordinator described his reactions to their division of family labor:

To be honest, I'm totally satisfied. When I had a first-period conference, I was a little more flexible; I'd help her more with changing 'em, you know, getting them ready for school, since I didn't have to be at school right away. Then I had to switch because they had some situation out at fifth-period conference, so that now she does it a little bit more than I do, and I don't help out with the kids as much in the morning because I have to be there an hour earlier.

This ambivalent co-provider clearly saw himself as "helping" his wife with the children, yet made light of her contributions by saying she does "a little bit more than I do." He went on to reveal how his wife did not enjoy similar special privileges due to her employment, since she had to pick up the children from day care every day, as well as taking them to school in the mornings:

She gets out a little later than I do, because she's an administrator but I have other things outside. I also work out, I run, and that sort of gives me a time away, to do that before they all come here. I have community meetings in the evenings sometimes, too. So, I mean, it might not be totally fair—maybe 60/40—but I'm thoroughly happy with the way things are.

While he was "thoroughly happy" with the current arrangements, she thought that it was decidedly unfair. She said, "I don't like the fact that it's taken for granted that I'm available. When he goes out he just assumes I'm available, but when I go out I have to consult with him to make sure he is available." For her, child care was a given; for him, it was optional. He commented, "If I don't have something else to do, then I'll take the kids."

Ambivalent co-provider husbands also tended to talk about regretting that their family involvements limited their careers or personal activities. For

instance the school teacher discussed above lamented that he could not do what he used to before he had children:

Having children keeps me away from thinking a lot about my work. You know, it used to be, before we had kids, I could have my mind geared to work—you know how ideas just pop in, you really get into it. But with kids it doesn't get as—you know, you can't switch. It gets more difficult, it makes it hard to get into it. I don't have that freedom of mind, you know, and it takes away from aspects of my work, like doing a little bit more reading or research that I would like to do. Or my own activities, I mean, I still run, but not as much as I used to. I used to play basketball, I used to coach, this and that . . .

Many of these husbands talked about struggles over wanting to spend more time on their careers, and most did not relinquish the assumption that the home was the wife's domain. For example, some ambivalent co-provider couples attempted to alleviate stress on the wife by hiring outside help. In response to a question about whether their division of labor was fair, a self-employed male attorney said, "Do you mean fair like equal? It's probably not equal, so probably it wouldn't be fair, but that's why we have a housekeeper." His wife, a social worker earning only ten percent less than he, said that the household was still her responsibility, but that she now had fewer tasks to do: "When I did not have help, I tended to do everything, but with a housekeeper, I don't have to do so much." She went on to talk about how she wished he would do more with their five- and eight-year-old children, but speculated that he probably would as they grew older.

Another couple paid a live-in babysitter/housekeeper to watch their three children during the day while he worked full-time in construction and she worked full-time as a psychiatric social worker. While she labeled the outside help as "essential," she noted that her husband contributed more to the mess than he did to its clean-up. He saw himself as an involved father because he played with his children, and she acknowledged this, but she also complained that he competed with them in games as if he were a child himself. His participation in routine household labor was considered optional, as evidenced by his comment, "I like to zook once in a while."

Co-Providers

In contrast, about a third of the couples we interviewed fully accepted the wife's long-term employment, considered her career to be just as important as his, and were in various stages of redefining household labor as men's work. Like the ambivalent couples discussed above, full co-provider spouses worked about the same number of hours as each other, but on the whole, these couples worked more total hours than their more ambivalent counterparts,

though their annual incomes were a bit lower. According to both husbands and wives, the sharing of housework and child care was substantially greater for full co-providers than for ambivalent co-providers, and also much more balanced than for main-providers.

Like ambivalent co-providers, husbands in full co-provider families discussed conflicts between work and family and sometimes alluded to the ways that their occupational advancement was limited by their commitments to their children. One husband and wife spent the same number of hours on the job, earned approximately the same amount of money, and were employed as engineering technicians for the same employer. When we asked him how his family involvement had affected his job performance, he responded by saying, "It should, OK, because I really need to spend a lot more time learning my work, and I haven't really put in the time I need to advance in the profession. I would like to spend, I mean I would spend, more time if I didn't have kids. I'd like to be able to play with the computer or read books more often." Although he talked about conflicts between job and family, he also emphasized that lost work time was not really a sacrifice because he valued time with his children so highly. He did not use his job as an excuse to get out of doing child care or housework, and he seemed to value his wife's career at least as much as his own:

I think her job is probably more important than mine because she's been at that kind of work a lot longer than I have. And at the level she is—it's awkward the way it is, because I get paid just a little bit more than she does, I have a higher position. But she definitely knows the work a lot more, she's been doing the same type of work for about nine years already, and I've only been doing this type of engineering work for about two-and-a-half years, so she knows a lot more. We both have to work, that's for sure.

Recognition of their roughly equivalent professional status and the need for two equal providers affected this couple's division of parenting and housework. The husband indicated that he did more child care and housework than his wife, and she gave him much credit for his efforts, but in her interview, she indicated that he still did less than half. She described her husband's relationship with their seven-year-old son as "very caring," and noted that he assists the boy with homework more than she does. She also said that her husband did most of the heavy cleaning and scrubbing, but also commented that he doesn't clean toilets and doesn't always notice when things get dirty. The husband described their allocation of housework by saying, "Maybe she does less than I do, but some of the things she does, I just will not do. I will not dust all the little things in the house. That's one of my least favorite things, but I'm more likely to do the mopping and vacuuming." This husband's comments also revealed some ongoing tension about whose housework standards should be maintained. He said, "she has high standards for cleanliness that you would have to be home to maintain. Mine tend to acknowledge that you don't always get to this stuff because you have other

things to do. I think I have a better acceptance that one priority hurts something else in the background."

While this couple generally agreed about how to raise their son, standards for child care were also subject to debate. He saw himself as doing more with his son than his wife, as reflected in comments such as "I tend to think of myself as the more involved parent, and I think other people have noticed that, too." . . . Like many of the other husbands, he went on to say that he thought their division of labor was unfair. Unlike the others, however, he indicated that he thought their current arrangements favored her needs, not his:

I think I do more housework. It's probably not fair, because I do more of the dirtier tasks. . . . Also, at this point, our solution tends to favor her free time more than my free time. I think that has more to do with our personal backgrounds. She has more personal friends to do things with, so she has more outside things to do whereas I say I'm not doing anything.

In this family, comparable occupational status and earnings, coupled with a relatively egalitarian ideology, led to substantial sharing of both child care and housework. While the husband tended to take more credit for his involvement than his wife gave him, we can see a difference between their talk and that of some of the families discussed above. Other husbands sometimes complained about their wife's high standards, but they also treated housework, and even parenting, as primarily her duty. They usually resented being nagged to do more around the house and failed to move out of a helper role. Rarely did such men consider it their duty to anticipate, schedule, and take care of family and household needs. In this co-provider household, in contrast, the gendered allocation of responsibility for child care and housework was not assumed. Because of this, negotiations over housework and parenting were more frequent than in the other families. Since they both held expectations that each would fulfill both provider and caretaker roles, resentments came from both spouses—not just from the wife.

Our interviews suggest that it might be easier for couples to share both provider and homemaker roles when, like the family above, the wife's earnings and occupational prestige equal or exceed those of her husband. For instance, in one of the couples reporting the most sharing of child care and housework, the wife earned \$36,000 annually as the executive director of a non-profit community organization and a consultant, and her husband earned \$30,000 as a self-employed general contractor. This couple started off their marriage with fairly conventional gender-role expectations and an unbalanced division of labor. While the husband's ideology had changed somewhat, he still talked like most of the main-provider husbands:

As far as the household is concerned, I divide a house into two categories: one is the interior and the other is the exterior. For the interior, my wife pushes me to deal with that. The exterior, I'm left to it myself. So, what

I'm basically saying is that generally speaking, a woman does not deal with the exterior. The woman's main concern is with the interior, although there is a lot of deviation.

In this family, an egalitarian belief system did not precede the sharing of household labor. The wife was still responsible for setting the "interior" household agenda and had to remind her husband to help with housework and child care. When asked whether he and his wife had arguments about housework, this husband laughed and said, "All the time, doesn't everybody?"

What differentiated this couple from most others, is that she made more money than he did and had no qualms about demanding help from him. While he had not yet accepted the idea that interior chores were equally his, he reluctantly performed them. She ranked his contributions to child care to be equal to hers, and rated his contributions to housework only slightly below her own. While not eagerly rushing to do the cooking, cleaning, or laundry, he complied with occasional reminders and according to his wife, was "a better cleaner" than she was.

His sharing stemmed, in part, from her higher earnings and their mutual willingness to reduce his "outside chores" by hiring outside help. Unlike the more ambivalent co-providers who hired housekeepers to do "her" chores, this couple hired a gardener to work on the yard so they could both spend more time focusing on the children and the house. Rather than complaining about their division of labor, he talked about how he has come to appreciate his situation:

Ever since I've known my wife, she's made more money than I have. Initially — as a man — I resented it. I went through a lot of head trips about it. But as time developed, I appreciated it. Now I respect it. The way I figure it is, I'd rather have her sharing the money with me than sharing it with someone else. She has her full-time job and then she has her part-time job as a consultant. The gardener I'm paying \$75 per week, and I'm paying someone else \$25 per week to make my lunch, so I'm enjoying it! It's self-interest.

The power dynamic in this family, coupled with their willingness to pay for outside help to reduce his chores, and the flexibility of his self-employed work schedule, led to substantial sharing of cooking, cleaning, and child care. Because she was making more money and working more hours than he was, he could not emulate other husbands in claiming priority for his provider activities.

Even when wives' earnings did not exceed the husbands', some co-providers shared the homemaker role. A male college-admissions recruiter and his executive-secretary wife shared substantial housework and child care according to mutual ratings. He made \$29,000 per year working a 50 hour week, while she made \$22,000 working a 40 hour week. She was willing to

give him more credit than he was willing to claim for child care, reflecting her sincere appreciation for his parenting efforts, which were greater than those of other fathers she knew. He placed a high value on her mothering and seemed to downplay the possibility that they should be considered equal parents. Like most of the men in this study, the college-recruiter husband was reluctant to perform house-cleaning chores. Like many co-providers, however, he managed to redefine some routine household chores as a shared responsibility. For instance, when we asked him what he liked least about housework, he laughingly replied, "Probably those damn toilets, man, and the showers, the bathrooms, gotta scrub 'em, argghh! I wish I didn't have to do any of that, you know the vacuuming and all that. But it's just a fact of life."

Even though he did more than most husbands, he acknowledged that he did less than his wife, and admitted that he sometimes tried to use his job to get out of doing more around the house. But whereas other wives often allowed husbands to use their jobs as excuses for doing less family work, or assumed that their husbands were incapable of performing certain chores like cooking or laundry, the pattern in this family resembled that of the failed-aspirations couples. In other words, the wife did not assume that housework was "her" job, did not accept her husband's job demands as justification for his doing less housework, and sometimes challenged his interpretation of how much his job required of him. She also got her husband to assume more responsibility by refraining from performing certain tasks. He commented:

Sometimes she just refuses to do something. . . . An example would be the ironing, you know, I never used to do the ironing, hated it. Now it's just something that happens. You need something ironed, you better iron if or you're not gonna have it in the morning. So, I think, you know, that kinda just evolved. I mean, she just gradually quit doing it so everybody just had to do their own. My son irons his own clothes, I iron my own clothes, my daughter irons her own clothes, the only one that doesn't iron is the baby, and next year she'll probably start.

The sociologist Jane Hood, whose path-breaking family research highlighted the importance of provider role definition to marital power, describes this strategy as "going on strike," and suggests that it is most effective when husbands feel the specific task *must* be done.¹¹ Since appearing neat and well-dressed was a priority for this husband, when his wife stopped ironing his clothes, he started doing it himself. Because he felt it was important for his children to be "presentable" in public, he also began to remind them to iron their own clothes before going visiting or attending church.

Although sharing tasks sometimes increases conflict, when both spouses assume that household tasks are a shared responsibility, negotiation can also become less necessary or contentious. For example, a co-provider husband who worked as a mail carrier commented, "I get home early and start dinner, make sure the kids do their homework, feed the dogs, stuff like that." He and

his wife, an executive secretary, agreed that they rarely talk about housework. She said, "When I went back to work we agreed that we both needed to share, and so we just do it." While she still reminded him to perform chores according to her standards or on her schedule, she summed up her appreciation by commenting, "at least he does it without complaining." Lack of complaint was a common feature of co-provider families. Whereas many main-provider husbands complained of having to do "her" chores, the co-providers rarely talked about harboring resentments. Main-provider husbands typically lamented not having the services of a stay-at-home wife, but co-provider husbands almost never made such comparisons.

Summary and Discussion

For these dual-earner Chicano couples, we found conventional masculine privilege as well as considerable sharing in several domains. First, as in previous studies of ethnic minority families, wives were employed a substantial number of hours and made significant contributions to the household income. Second, like some who have studied Chicano families, we found that couples described their decision-making to be relatively fair and equal.¹² Third, fathers in these families were more involved in child rearing than their own fathers had been, and many were rated as sharing a majority of child care tasks. Finally, while no husband performed fully half of the housework, a few made substantial contributions in this area as well.

One of the power dynamics that appeared to undergird the household division of labor in these families was the relative earning power of each spouse, though this was modified by factors such as occupational prestige, provider role status, and personal preference. . . .

While relative income appeared to make a significant difference in marital power, we observed no simple or straightforward exchange of market resources for domestic services. Other factors like failed career aspirations or occupational status influenced marital dynamics and helped explain why some wives were willing to push a little harder for change in the division of household labor. In almost every case, husbands reluctantly responded to requests for help from wives. Only when wives explicitly took the initiative to shift some of the housework burden to husbands did the men begin to assume significant responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the household. Even when they began to share the housework and child care, men tended to do some of the less onerous tasks like playing with the children or washing the dinner dishes. When we compared these men to their own fathers, or their wives' fathers, however, we could see that they were sharing more domestic chores than the generation that preceded them.

The economies of gratitude in these families were not equally balanced, but many exhibited divisions of household labor that contradicted cultural

stereotypes of macho men and male-dominated families. Particularly salient in these families was the lack of fit between their own class position and that of their parents. Most of the parents were Mexican immigrants with little education and low occupational mobility. The couples we interviewed, in contrast, were well-educated and relatively secure in middle-class occupations. The couples could have compared themselves to their parents, evaluating themselves to be egalitarian and financially successful. While some did just that, most compared themselves to their Anglo and Chicano friends and coworkers, many of whom shared as much or more than they did. Implicitly comparing their earnings, occupational commitments, and perceived aptitudes, husbands and wives negotiated new patterns of work/family boundaries and developed novel justifications for their emerging arrangements. These were not created anew, but emerged out of the popular culture in which they found themselves. Judith Stacey labels such developments the making of the "postmodern family," because they signal "the contested, ambivalent, and undecided character of contemporary gender and kinship arrangements."¹³ Our findings confirm that families are an important site of new struggles over the meaning of gender and the rights and obligations of men and women in each other and over each other's labor. . . .

NOTES

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1. For a discussion of how the term machismo can also reflect positive attributes of respect, loyalty, responsibility and generosity, see Alfredo Mirandé, "Chicano Fathers: Traditional Perceptions and Current Realities," in *Fatherhood Today*, ed. P. Bronstein and C. Cowan (New York: Wiley, 1988), pp. 93-106.
2. For reviews of literature on Latin-American families and projections on their future proportionate representation in the population, see Randall Collins and Scott Coltrane, *Sociology of Marriage and the Family* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1994); William A. Vega, "Hispanic Families in the 1980s," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52 (1990): 1015-24; and Norma Williams, *The Mexican-American Family* (New York: General Hall, 1990).
3. Maxine Baca Zinn, "Family, Feminism, and Race in America," *Gender & Society* 4 (1990):68-82; Mirandé, "Chicano Fathers"; Vega, "Hispanic Families"; and Williams, *The Mexican-American Family*.
4. See Coltrane, *Family Man: Fatherhood, Housework, and Gender Equity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Coltrane and Valdez, "Reluctant Compliance: Work/Family Role Allocation in Dual-Earner Chicano Families," in *Men, Work, and Family*, ed. Jane C. Hood (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1994); and Valdez and Coltrane, "Work, Family, and the Chicana: Power, Perception and Equity," in *Employed*

- Mothers and the Family Context* ed. Judith Frankel (New York: Springer, 1993). I thank Hilda Cortez, a summer research intern at the University of California, for help in transcribing some of the interviews and for providing insight into some of the issues faced by these families.
5. Jessie Bernard, *The Future of Marriage* (New York: World, 1972).
 6. See Jane Hood, "The Provider Role: Its Meaning and Measurement," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 48 (1986): 349-59.
 7. Hood, "The Provider Role."
 8. See Coltrane, "Household Labor and the Routine Production of Gender," *Social Problems* 36:473-90.
 9. I am indebted to Arlie Hochschild, who first used this term in *The Second Shift* (New York: Viking Press, 1987). See also Karen Pyke and Scott Coltrane, "Entitlement, Obligation, and Gratitude in Remarriage: Toward a Gendered Understanding of Household Labor Allocation."
 10. I am indebted to Joseph Pleck for his conceptualization of "asymmetrically permeable" work/family boundaries ("The Work-Family Role System," *Social Problems* 24:417-27).
 11. Jane Hood, *Becoming a Two-Job Family*, p. 131.
 12. See, for example, V. Cromwell and R. Cromwell, "Perceived Dominance in Decision Making and Conflict Resolution among Anglo, Black, and Chicano Couples," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 40 (1978): 749-60; G. Hawkes and M. Taylor, "Power Structure in Mexican and Mexican-American Farm Labor Families," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 37 (1975): 807-81; L. Ybarra, "When Wives Work: The Impact on the Chicano Family," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 44:169-78.
 13. Judith Stacey (1982). *Brave New Families* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), p. 17.

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CUSTODIAL CARE, SURROGATE
CARE, AND COORDINATED CAREEmployed Mothers and
the Meaning of Child Care

LYNET UTTAL

Lynet Uttal received her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 1993. She is currently an assistant professor of sociology in the Department of Child and Family Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Uttal says that the following excerpt, taken from *Gender and Society* (1996), reflects a long-time concern with how people balance work and family. She states: "As an 18-year-old, I asked a medical student, 'How do you combine work and family?' He looked at me as if I were from Mars, and

I decided to not go to medical school. Several years later, I spent many hours observing mothers and child care providers and began to wonder about another piece of this puzzle of balancing work and family: How do mothers make sense of their child care arrangements in a society that ideologically views mothers as the primary person responsible for raising their children? This selection reflects my continuing concern with how to find a healthy balance between work and family responsibilities."

I vividly remember interviewing one mother, Cathy Perry,¹ about her history of child care arrangements for three children (ages six years, four years, and eight months). She was breast feeding her baby during the interview and she repeatedly told me about how she "didn't believe in other people raising your children"; yet, she also told me how she worked 45 hours per week at two different jobs, one that took her away from home in the evenings and the other that she did while her older children were in preschool and kindergarten in the mornings. Each gentle hug she gave while nursing that brought her baby closer to her was a statement to me that she was a full-time, stay-at-home domestic mother in the most conservative sense of its meaning, even though she was also a full-time employed woman.

It was the apparent contradiction between Cathy's presentation of herself as a full-time domestic mother and her full-time employment status that led me to ask: What meaning do employed mothers give to having others take care of their children for regular, extended periods of time? In this article, I will describe three views of child care—custodial, surrogate, and coordinated—in which mothers interpret child care in relationship to their own mothering and the dominant cultural ideology of motherhood. Their accounts illustrate the disjunction of their experiences with the current dominant cultural ideology of motherhood and how employed mothers resolve this rupture by holding different expectations of what child care providers are supposed to do as their children's alternative caregivers. Their views of child care do not align with the current dominant cultural ideology of motherhood in the United States. Instead, they create new understandings of motherhood that reflect their employment status and the involvement of others who influence and shape their children's social and moral development.

In the United States, the dominant cultural ideology of motherhood is embodied in two common images: the full-time, domestic mother whose only job is her family and the employed supermom who does it all—job, self, and family (Thurer 1994). Politically and ideologically, these two images have been pitted against one another in ideological contestations about the responsibility of women for mothering.

Both images—the domestic mother and the employed professional supermom—are class-biased, even though as dominant cultural images they purport to speak to all women. Despite its class bias, the newer image of the

employed mother is closer to the reality of most women's lives because it takes employment status into account. Feminist revisionist history reveals that full-time domesticity has not been a common practice for many working-class women (Hareven 1982) and women of color (Dill 1986; Nakano Glenn 1992). Many women have regularly contributed to their family incomes by working both inside their homes as well as outside their homes. Since 1973, this pattern has become increasingly common for middle-class women as well (Institute for Women's Policy Research 1992).

Neither of these images of mothers challenge a gendered notion of parenting or the assumption of the all-powerful mother (Bernard 1974; Chodorow and Contratto 1980). Both images maintain the assumption that mothers are the primary adults responsible for child rearing and that they accomplish this enormous task alone. This is evident even in the employed supermom image. The supermom image acknowledges that employed mothers are not constantly present, and in this regard, it presents an alternative to the domestic mother image. The employed supermom image, nonetheless, still presents the fiction that mothers rear children single-handedly, even if they have to compress it into more limited periods of time. This assumption is further reinforced by the absence of any mention of child care providers who care for the children in the mother's absence.

It is surprising that more research has not looked at the role of child care in supporting mothers' efforts to coordinate their employment and family responsibilities. Using child care is almost an entirely unavoidable condition of employment. In 1990, only 4.5 percent of the youngest children under five years old in families with employed mothers remained with their mothers while they worked (Hofferth et al. 1991).² Many mothers use child care for as much as 40–50 hours per week. This extensive use of child care pushes the acceptable boundaries of those prescribed by even the more liberal supermom image.

How do employed mothers who are employed during the day reconcile their lives with the dominant ideology of motherhood when a condition of their employment is that they transfer the care of their children to other adults? We do not really know, because child care research in general has neglected to look at the meaning of motherhood to the women who use child care services. Instead, many studies have looked at the effects of child care on young children's social and cognitive development (Scarr, Phillips, and McCartney 1994). Many have focused on availability and affordability of child care, and they have documented types of child care used and the amount of time children are not with their mothers, as well as how much families spend on child care and mothers' levels of satisfaction with their child care arrangements (Hofferth et al. 1991; Lajewski 1959; Low and Spindler 1968; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1983).

This latter view of child care conceptualizes it as a service that provides a location for children to be during their parents' absence. These studies do

not ask mothers how they feel about transferring the care of their children to others, nor do they problematize the relationship between child rearing and child care. Does using child care lead a mother to question her own involvement in mothering, or the degree to which she is able to meet the cultural imperative that mothers are the primary agents in child rearing? By studying the meaning of child care to employed mothers, we begin to address questions that go beyond the technical solutions of how mothers balance their work and family demands, and we begin to examine how their understandings of their situations not only resolve the work and family conflicts but also transform our ideological assumptions about what mothering is supposed to be.

Below, I analyze how employed mothers of preschoolers, toddlers, and infants reconcile the dominant cultural ideology that children are supposed to be raised by their mothers with the reality that their jobs require them to leave their children in other people's care. This analysis is based on in-depth interviews with 31 employed mothers who used a variety of child care arrangements, including private sitters, day care center workers, family day care providers, relatives, and their partners.³ I identify three views of child care: custodial care, surrogate care, and coordinated care. I analyze how these interpretations reflect how employed mothers incorporate or reject the dominant ideology of motherhood in understanding their own motherhood and their differing expectations of child care providers. I conclude by discussing how these perceptions of child care challenge the hegemony of the dominant ideology of motherhood and resolve the disjunction between the dominant ideology of motherhood and the women's definitions of their situations.

Child Care and the Meaning of Motherhood

Employed mothers . . . develop microideologies about child care, which reflect how they respond to the dominant cultural ideology of motherhood, the structural constraints of the organization of their work schedules, and their individual ideals about mothering. First of all, it is evident that the meaning of motherhood is an integral element in their views on child care because when they talk about child care, they often speak about their own mothering and motherhood in general, and they frequently use images of mothering to describe their feelings about child care. For example, some mothers used references to mothering to describe what they sought from child care (someone who would care for this child "like a mother would") and to describe what child care providers do (that they are like "a substitute parent" as well as that child care providers cannot substitute for "what mothers do").

The mothers expressed a range of feelings about their own mothering in relationship to their employment: Most of them spoke about wanting to work fewer hours so that they could be more available to mother their children; however, few mentioned feeling guilty about being employed and

most of them talked about how they did not want to be "only" full-time mothers. . . .

In this study, mothers differed in what they defined as "child rearing" and "child care" and the degree to which they perceived mothering and child care as overlapping. They spoke about what they expect their child care providers to do for their children and what they defined as the boundaries of that care. These understandings were developed out of the tension between what the dominant cultural ideology prescribes mothers are supposed to be and do and their need/desire to have others care for their children because their employment takes them away.

Below I define the three general views of child care that emerged: custodial care, surrogate care, and coordinated care.

Custodial Care

Nine of the employed mothers defined child care as custodial care. These mothers maintained themselves as the primary socializers and rearers of their children, even when their children were in other people's care for long hours each week. They defined the responsibilities of their child care provider as providing adult supervision and meeting immediate physical and emotional needs (such as feeding, physical safety, diaper changes, and attention to minor hurts) in their absence. These mothers did not acknowledge that what child care providers did substituted for their mothering. By defining child care as custodial, mothers maintained their status as domestic mothers in spite of their extended absences. This was accomplished by setting sharp limits on what child care providers are supposed to do and defining limited boundaries of the child care providers' influence on their children's social and moral development.

Some mothers, like Deidre Lewis, an African American administrative assistant and mother of two children, view their child care as custodial because their children are in nonparental care only part time. As long as the care provides a physically safe environment and keeps their children occupied, they are not concerned about whether there is a strong fit between their child rearing values and the child care providers' caregiving styles. These mothers believe that the short amount of time that their children are in any person's care limits its influence (both good and bad) on their children's social and moral development, even though it may be regular care and the total time in care by multiple caregivers exceeds 40 hours per week.

This view of child care as custodial was also held by mothers who had their children in the full-time child care of a single caregiver. Several mothers expressed their fear that the people who took care of their children would become mothers in their children's eyes. When Cathy Perry, the Anglo American mother introduced at the beginning of this article, had her first child six years ago, she quit work because her employer would not let her work out a schedule that would accommodate her family. When she decided to go back to work after four months because she wanted adult contact, her

choice of employment was informed by her view of child care. She found a job with her current employer at the security company working "four tens . . . 8:00 at night to 4:00 in the morning" during which time her husband watched the baby. She chose this schedule because when Cathy was a teenager, she remembered a friend who cared for one family so much that the kids were calling her "mom." Cathy never wanted that to happen with her own children. . . . Cathy's strategy of working primarily at night allows her to assert that her children are not aware of her absence because they are asleep for most of the time that she is gone. Her perception of child care as custodial care defines mothers as the primary parent in spite of the time that children are in other people's care.

Cathy maintains herself as mother through her understanding of why her children are in other people's care and the nature of the relationship between these other adults and her children. She defines preschool and kindergarten as providing enrichment activities for her children, not child rearing and mothering. First she said:

They are there for a purpose. It's not just to get rid of them, or whatever. They're there to learn. He doesn't have to go to preschool. He goes because I feel [his] need for an extra edge to get into kindergarten. It's not for my convenience. It's something he needs.⁴

Second, she defines a rigid distinction between parent/child and teacher/child relationships by pointing out that only she or her husband as parents can provide emotional security for her children. She said:

They are not there as a parent or trying to take the place of a parent. They are there to do a job. A teacher is more structured, a teacher has certain things to do at a certain time, a time for talking, cuddling; or whatever, the time for art . . . When you're hurt, when something happens to you as a child, who do you want? You want your parent.

She also defines a difference between mothers and fathers, which children perceive. She said:

There is a maternal drive. There's a neurotic maternal need or whatever, that even the best father doesn't have. And he, the way I put it is that he is a great father, he's a wonderful father, but he'll never be a mother. . . . It wouldn't matter what the kids were doing, if they were doing their most favorite thing in the world, whatever it was, and I come in the door. The room stops. . . . I have a special closeness and stuff that he can never get. Mom's home, dad's dirt.

Cathy establishes a clear distinction between child care by others and mothering along several dimensions: time awake/time asleep, maternal care/paternal care, parental love/provider care, purpose of home/purpose of child care. Each dimension maintains her as providing what is uniquely mothering; this is not jeopardized by the kinds of interactions her children have with other caretakers. Although the dimensions varied, the definition

of different kinds of relationships and responsibilities is shared by other mothers with this view of child care.

Maria Hernandez, a Mexican American woman who works full time as an office manager of a small private business, shares with Cathy Perry the fear that her four-year-old child would think of his caregiver grandmother in the way that she feels should be reserved for his mother. Like Cathy, she remembers when she cared for her niece and that the child often thought of Maria as her mother. She said:

I think some kids are with their sitters so long that they start to see their sitters as their parents. I know a lot of kids who call their baby-sitters their mama, or mommie, and to me, it's real important that they know who their mother is.

Because she does not want her son to identify others as his mother, she is "always telling him, I'm your mom, she's your grandma." Making this distinction clear to her son also maintains her as mother, despite her regular and extended absences.

Like Cathy, Maria defines her child care arrangement as custodial care because it cannot provide what a mother gives. In addition, Maria believes that it is her responsibility as her child's mother to make up for the limitations of her child care provider. She said:

When I'm at home, now that I'm home one day a week, I try to do art and other stuff, because I know that at his grandmother's, he watches TV, eats well, plays outdoors, but he doesn't do anything academic.

Both mothers identify different aspects of care that are missing from what their providers give their children. Whereas Cathy defines child care as providing extra educational opportunities, but not mother love, Maria sees her child care providing physical and emotional supervision, but no educational activities. To a certain degree, these differences reflect the kind of care their children are in; Cathy's children are in a preschool and Maria's child is cared for by his grandmother in a private home setting. The significance of identifying a difference between care of mothers and the care of child care providers is that it maintains the distinction between what mothers and child care providers do, and mothers perceive this as limiting the influence of child care on their children and its invasion into the areas that mark their motherhood.

Another characteristic of mothers who perceive child care as custodial is their belief that they manage their child care, even in their absence. Cathy Perry continues to carry out her mothering responsibilities while she is physically apart from her children. Before she leaves for work, she prepares meals and childproofs the house. While at work, she regularly calls home and gives instructions over the phone. As a result, her authority and authenticity as a mother are intact even though she is frequently absent. . . .

In sum, mothers with custodial care perceptions generally see child care by providers as distinct from what mothers provide their children. Care by a child care provider provides temporary physical supervision, limited emo-

tional care, and a restricted set of opportunities. They define mothering as more encompassing than what child care providers do. This perception of child care is consistent with all of the expectations prescribed by the dominant ideology of motherhood, except full-time presence, and it maintains mothers as the primary agent who is responsible for the overall physical and emotional well-being and social upbringing of their children.

Surrogate Care

Three employed mothers viewed their child care as surrogate care. They define their child care provider as their child's primary caretaker and they perceive the child care provider as the person whose relationship with their child most resembles the domestic mother-child relationship. In essence, they feel that their children are getting from their child care providers what mothers are supposed to give—both emotionally and physically.

The child's mother maintains her formal parental rights (such as the decision of whether to keep her child in that particular care situation), yet she interprets the nature of the relationship between her child and the provider as resembling the sort of relationship that the dominant ideology of motherhood prescribes a mother should be having with her child. At the time of her interview, Linda Molina's 16-year-old cousin from Mexico was taking care of her 11-month-old son while she worked full-time, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, as a warehouse supervisor. Throughout the interview, she frequently expressed her concern that her son is more attached to his caregiver than to her. She reported "[My child] never looks for me. When my cousin is here, I don't exist." She also said that she was

sometimes sad because he knows that I'm his mother, he loves me, but for everything he looks for her. Everything. When he's hungry, when he's bored, just for everything, he prefers her.

She is distressed that her child care provider has replaced her as her child's primary caregiver because she never intended to not be the central adult in her child's life. Like mothers who view child care as custodial, she wants to mother in a way that resembles the full-time, domestic mother; yet, unlike those who view care as custodial, she does not view herself as fulfilling the prescriptions of domestic motherhood and she also acknowledges the extent to which child care providers often do what the dominant ideology of motherhood defines as mothering. At the core of her perception of surrogate care is her sense of displacement because her child is more emotionally attached to his child care provider than to his mother to meet his needs.

Two of the mothers felt that their displacement by their child care provider is the result of their being away from their children too much and not fulfilling their mother duties enough. Although both want to be employed, the conditions of their employment are not their ideal. One Anglo American mother has to work full time instead of part time because her family is dependent on the health insurance she gets through her job. Linda

Molina works as much as she does because it is economically necessary. Linda perceives her mothering presence as being limited because her economic circumstances have caused her to be emotionally replaced by her child care provider who spends more time with her child. Linda perceives surrogate care negatively, and she plans to rectify the situation by switching to a waitressing job with a more flexible schedule that will allow her to be home more often during the day.

In contrast, the third mother, Kathryn Ercolini, an Anglo American mother and city administrator, views herself as displaced because she defines her child care provider as a more competent caregiver than herself. Like Linda, Kathryn is part of a dual-earner couple and works a 9 to 5, Monday through Friday schedule. Her total family income is \$63,000, almost twice that of Linda Molina's. She shares with Linda the perception of her child care as surrogate care, and like Linda, much of it is undergirded by her sense of being less needed than her child care provider to mother her child.

Kathryn has a history of perceiving whomever currently takes care of her child, whether it is her husband, Paul, or her current provider, Rosita, as the person who really mothers her child. She feels replaced by them because she perceives both Rosita and her husband as more competent at child rearing than she. Speaking about her husband who was the primary child care provider for her child's first year, she said:

Sometimes I felt inadequate. Sometimes I felt that even if I were to be here with Danielle more, I wasn't as good at it as Paul. It was mostly because I was feeling that I wasn't doing my, you know, my motherly duty or something like that. I would ask him to do things, like cutting the fingernails or the toenails when she was a little infant. I was always afraid to do those sort of things. And I guess what it all boils down to is this feeling of inadequacy or lack of commitment or something, that I should just always be doing something more than I am. And she shouldn't probably even be in day care at all, I should have her home, but I'd go crazy and I know that. I know that I could not happily be a full-time child care provider for my own child.

Later she added, "I've probably transferred that onto Rosita now. Now I feel like *she* does a much better job than I do." For Kathryn, it is not a matter of not enough time or emotional bonding, but who is more skilled to best provide for the physical and emotional care of her child. Paradoxically, Kathryn fulfills her mothering responsibility by replacing her self-perceived inadequate self with a person who will provide the kind of care that the dominant ideology prescribes a child should be getting from his or her mother, even if that person is not her.

Unlike mothers who view child care as custodial, both Kathryn and Linda define what their child care providers do as similar to what mothers are supposed to do, and they acknowledge the extent to which their children are being mothered by others. Their perceptions of their child care providers as the primary caretaker and the one who actively mothers their child col-

lapses the distinction between "child rearing" and "child care." Although the conditions of their employment and the degree of their commitment to their work and mothering also differ, their cumulative view of child care is the same. Both understand that their jobs lead to an excessive degree of absence from their children, which in turn leads them to view their children as being more actively cared for by others. They view their child care providers as carrying out much of what mothers are supposed to do. Whether they cannot be there or have chosen to not be there more, defining the child care provider as the primary caretaker reconciles the objective reality of these women's lives as full-time employees with their adherence to the component of the dominant ideology of motherhood that defines what kind of maternal care children should be getting. The quandary is that for their children to be mothered, they transfer not only the responsibilities of mothering, but they also transfer from themselves to their child care providers the status and recognition of motherhood. Because these mothers adhere to the dominant cultural ideology of motherhood while acknowledging that their child care providers are mothering their children, they view their child care providers as replacing them as mothers.

Coordinated Care

Nineteen of the employed mothers defined child care as coordinated care. Like mothers who view child care as surrogate care, they acknowledge the degree to which other people are caring for and influencing their children's social and moral development; however, they do not view this as being replaced, because they view what mothers and child care providers do as a joint contribution to the child's development and well-being, and they do not view themselves as mothering less because others also care for their children. In short, they perceive themselves as sharing mothering with their child care providers.

Characteristic of this group of mothers is that they refer to child care as co-mothering with their child care providers. Their language frequently reflected this view: a middle-class Mexican American mother said, "this is the place my baby spends her day at, these are like her parents"; a working-class Anglo American woman defined child care as "look[ing] for your child's mother"; a working-class Mexican American mother spoke of herself and her caregiver as "a team"; a middle-class Mexican American mother spoke of her caregiver as her "co-mother"; a low-income African American mother explained how conscious she was that "this extended type of child-raising" is a survival strategy for her; and finally, a middle-class Anglo American mother said, "I feel like [child care providers are] kind of mothers, too, you know, not only us, because they take care of our kids."

Characteristic of these mothers is that they acknowledge that child care providers are carrying out many of the functions typically considered to be mothering; yet, unlike mothers with surrogate and custodial care definitions of child care, these mothers define the transfer of responsibilities to child care

providers as sharing child rearing. It creates a cooperative alliance that is beneficial for both their children and themselves. Diane Gomez, a Mexican American full-time receptionist, whose three-year-old child is cared for in a family day care home, said:

I understand that I am the mother and she's the care provider, [and] at the same time I never feel jealous because she's taking more care of Grego than I do. I don't feel that way. I feel that she's helping me in some way through my problems, and I appreciate that a lot from her. Time that I don't have for Grego, somebody else will do it for me. It's not easy, but life is not easy. And I had to let go my feelings in a way [by] saying let go, let this person help Grego to grow. And *both of us* will probably do a good job.

Although Diane is one of the four mothers who would prefer to quit working and be a full-time, stay-at-home mother, her financial situation will not allow it. By defining child care as a shared activity, she maintains herself as an involved mother.

Because these mothers acknowledge that their child care providers are carrying out mothering functions, their response is to actively coordinate what their providers do with what they do as mothers. This coordination is expressed in several different ways: through coordinating child rearing philosophies, values, and practices, as well as closely communicating with one another, especially when differences arise.

For example, when Frances Trudeau, an African American lawyer, and the mother of two young children, was looking for a child care arrangement, she consciously sought a provider whom she felt shared her values. Frances said:

It would be what I'd do if I were taking care of him. . . . If I'm not going to be in the position for one reason or another to interpret the world for him in that way, to reframe situations in order for him to see that there's a better way of doing things, then I want someone else to do that.

Frances acknowledges that child care providers are socializing children as well as ensuring their emotional and physical safety. She recognizes that her children will be influenced by their caregivers, and she wants to make sure that she chooses a child care provider that will be teaching her children what she wants them to learn.

In a recent study of in-home caregivers hired by well-to-do parents, Julia Wrigley (1995) found that some parents view child care as providing cultural education and that this becomes an important criteria in selecting a child care provider, especially as children become older. Similarly, some Mexican American mothers in this study sought out Mexican American child care providers specifically because they wanted their children to be exposed to their traditional cultural milieu. One mother said:

Given that my child would be in the household for a significant number of hours during the day, I was hoping that there be some similarity, you

know. Not that I'm traditional, I don't consider myself traditional, but you know, but those values I wanted, kind of implanted, you know, issues of discipline, you know, being really caring and nurturing and being familiar with Spanish.

In addition to concerns about what children are fed, how they are disciplined, and how they are treated, which all these mothers share, those mothers whose children are not white are also attentive to assessing how caregivers respond to racial differences and racial incidents. One African American mother expressed the view that hearing a child care provider say "I don't discriminate" is not enough evidence that the child care provider could provide a safe racial climate for her child. She also needs to know that the child care provider's responses are based on a philosophy of race and race relations with which she agrees.

Their philosophies of child rearing and their cultural beliefs are integral to their assessment of the seemingly mundane daily practices of their child care providers. Mary Turner, an Anglo American mother of two and a gardener, believes that children should be breast fed and that using cloth diapers is environmentally superior to paper diapers. She said:

I wanted someone who, first, wasn't gonna make me feel weird because I was breast feeding and pumping milk to feed her. . . . And I also didn't want someone who was keeping a lot of junk around their house, that would probably hand an Oreo cookie to her because that's what they had around the house. . . . I had Danielle in cloth diapers and I didn't want someone who was going to complain about that and say, "I'm sorry but I only will take a child if they have plastic disposables."

Matching values and practices is especially important because these mothers view child care as an extension of home, and vice versa. These beliefs translate into actions and are reflected in what mothers do at home; for example, Diane Gomez has her son take his naps at home on the weekends at the same time as he does during the week at day care.

Synchronizing philosophies, values, and practices requires that mothers and child care providers regularly talk about child rearing with their child care providers. Mothers report that this talk goes in both directions: They learn from their child care providers and they also advise their child care providers. . . .

Because achieving total synchronization of child rearing practices is not possible, mothers accept differences if they believe that there is a generally agreed upon set of child rearing values between themselves and their caregivers. Lisa Garni, an Anglo American administrative assistant of a small company and the single mother of a three-year-old boy, has multiple caregivers. . . . These differences are acceptable to Lisa because each person communicates what they are doing:

We talk about . . . how all [four] of us, my parents, me, or Sarah, how we all probably handle it all differently. Differently but consistent, not so