A Narrative Study of Male Accompanying Partners: Adaptation to a Nontraditional Role in Dyadic Partnerships

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A NARRATIVE STUDY OF MALE ACCOMPANYING PARTNERS: ADAPTATION TO A NONTRADITIONAL ROLE IN DYADIC PARTNERSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

A Narrative Study of Male Accompanying Partners: Adaptation to a Nontraditional Role in Dyadic Partnerships

by

Donald J. Bernard

Although the traditional conceptual paradigm of an accompanying spouse, sometimes referred to in social science literature as a trailing partner, emanates from a predominantly female perspective, an emerging trend involves men functioning in that role. With America’s changing workforce due to the increased labor force participation of women, a postmodern family structure has emerged as the role of men as breadwinners-in-chief in the traditional nuclear family has been steadily eroded. The academic literature on the traditional pattern of wives trailing their husbands to new geographical for better employment and income is voluminous. However, studies on the emergence of males accompanying their partners are under-researched from the male perspective. Based on Adaptation and Coping Congruence Theories, this study adds a significant new dimension to this discussion by exploring and analyzing the actual experiences of males who have accompanied their partners, the coping strategies they employed to deal with their nontraditional role, and the influence of gendered expectations on their attempts to adapt to a nontraditional role-reversal. This study used narrative inquiry as a qualitative research procedure in a non-random criterion sampling with in-depth interviews of the experiences of the 12 participants who are partners of professional women. Moreover, it explored the subjective meanings they ascribed to their nontraditional role. The collected
interview data were analyzed to determine what influence the construct of gendered expectations had on the male accompanying partners’ adaptation to a nontraditional role. The results revealed that the majority of the participants transitioned to their new role with no or relatively minor adaptation problems. Moreover, at least nine of the men did not embrace a rigid gender role ideology or harbor gendered expectations in the partnership. To the contrary, the majority of the men subscribed to an egalitarian philosophy, felt secure about themselves in their nontraditional role, complemented their partners’ lives, and shared equally in the duties and goals of the dyadic partnership.
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First and foremost, I give honor, glory, and praise to God, my Heavenly Father, to the Son, and Holy Spirit from whom all blessings flow, for guiding my life and providing the fortitude for perseverance in my academic endeavors. I am most grateful to my committee chair, Dr. Yeonsoo Kim, for her guidance, support and encouragement, as well as her infectious enthusiasm for higher learning and research. An abundance of gratitude also goes to my dissertation committee members: Dr. Cecilia Maldonado for originally getting me started on this journey, and her vision, which became an important source of encouragement and inspiration for me; Dr. Patrick Carlton, for his honest, constructive, and invaluable critique and encouragement throughout the process; and Dr. Robert Parker, for his tremendous encouragement, invaluable guidance, unwavering support, and belief in me and this study.

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Finally, I am very grateful to the participants in this study for the time taken from their busy schedules to share their respective journeys, without which this project would have come to fruition. Their openness and willingness to permit a momentary glimpse
into their personal lives will serve as an important, but permanent contribution to scholarly research in the future.
DEDICATION

In my daily journey, I am reminded of the immense sacrifices made by my wonderful and inspiring parents, the late Compton Omeyer Bernard and Edmonia Jeanpierre Bernard, during my life, as they struggled to raise my nine siblings and me. The proud smiles they both exhibited when I graduated from college and from law school are frozen in my memory just as vividly now as they were then. I am so grateful for the seeds they planted that have contributed to shaping me into who I am today. Therefore, I dedicate this dissertation in their memory. May they forever rest in peace!
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Shortly after Hurricane Katrina struck the city of New Orleans in 2005, Monique and Damian sought opportunities to relocate. They had met at Georgetown University where Monique had earned a master’s degree in journalism in 1996, the same year that Damian earned his master’s degree in business administration. They were married two months later in Washington, where Monique lived. Although Monique had interviewed for employment at that time with the Washington Post, which she was certain would have been offered, Damian unilaterally announced that they would move to New Orleans, his native city, where he would join a small management consulting firm. Monique acquiesced, deferring her dreams of working for a prominent national newspaper, but subsequently was able to land a job with the local Times-Picayune newspaper in New Orleans. During their years in New Orleans, two children were born to the young couple. Monique soon settled into balancing her multiple roles of housewife, mother, and dual earner.

Following Hurricane Katrina the newspaper was forced to scale back its operation and Monique was among several employees who were laid off. Prior to Katrina, business at Damian’s consulting firm had been mediocre at best. Unemployed, Monique’s interest in the Washington Post was renewed. She applied for employment and was offered a position. Initially, Damian expressed grave reluctance about relocating without the benefit of a job for himself in the new location. However, after six months of a commuter marriage between Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the location of their interim home, and
Washington, D.C., he trailed Monique along with their two children to their new community.

The story presented above includes three distinct scenarios, the first depicting Monique as the *accompanying partner*, then both in the role of *dual earners*, followed by Damian’s adapting to the nontraditional role of an *accompanying partner*. These scenarios are illustrative of an increasingly prevalent “accompanying partner phenomenon”. In the first scenario the female partner acquiesces to the wishes of her male partner and “trails” him to another geographical location. It is illustrative of the traditional notion of a “*trailing spouse,*” one that conjures up the image of a female spouse who trails her husband to a different geographical location where he has accepted employment (Braseby, 2010; Harvey & Wiese 1998; Hendershott, 1995; McNulty, 2002). The third scenario depicts the male experiencing the transition to the nontraditional role of “*trailing spouse,*” Although the term *trailing partner* was used as far back as 1981 in popular business literature, it remains rather fluid. Recently, the term *accompanying partner* has been used in referring to the partner of the primary hire in situations involving dual-career couples (Braseby, 2010; Promin, 2011). In this study the term *accompanying partner* is used.

**Problem Statement**

The accompanying partner phenomenon evokes a number of related issues associated with adaptation and the coping strategies surrounding this process, including gender role ideologies and/or gendered expectations; dual earner households, and to some extent, the issue of work/family-life balance. The traditional pattern of wives trailing their husbands to new geographical locations for better employment opportunities became the
norm well into the latter part of the twentieth century (Braseby, 2010; McNulty, 2005; McNulty & Boyko, 2004). Many of the previous studies on this topic reported the perspectives of women relative to their role as spouses of expatriates or transferees (and their cultural, sociological, and psychological issues) to their new environment (Aycan, 2011; Bielby & Bielby, 1992; Braseby, 2010; Caligiuri, Joshi, & Lazarova, 1999; McNulty, 2002; Harvey & Wiese, 1998; Selmer & Leung, 2003). Additionally, non–gender-specific studies analyzed the perspectives of both spouses in the context of theories of adaptation and the positive or negative impact of gendered expectations (Gerson, 2010; Hendershott, 1995). However, the number of studies that focused specifically on exploring male accompanying partners’ role conceptualization of this phenomenon are very limited (Selmer & Leung, 2003; Braseby, 2010; Simon, 2011). In short, research on male accompanying partners is an under-researched area (Cole, 2009; Selmer & Leung, 2003).

Scholars have also decried the fact that men are conspicuously absent from the academic discussion about important work-life issues, noting that males are underrepresented in work/family research, almost as if the researchers “devalue or ignore men’s experiences of conflict, stress, and challenge” (Kirby, Golden, Medved, Jorgenson, & Buzzanell, 2003, p.29). This study attempts to fill the gap in these research shortcomings.

Understanding the dynamics involved in adapting to this reversal of roles is an issue that male accompanying partners face as they assume enhanced domestic responsibilities due to the erosion of their roles as breadwinners-in-chief, and as women’s
time, ability, and desire to be caregivers diminish; a final topic this study addresses (Gerson, 2010; Harvey & Wiese, 1998).

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of male accompanying partners and their adaptation to a nontraditional role from a comprehensive perspective 1) as an individual; 2) as a partner in a dyadic partnership (male accompanying partner and/or dual earner); 3) as a husband, friend, father, and family member; and 4) as a member of the broader community. In this study, the concept of the male accompanying partner’s roles was explored primarily within the context of the theories of adaptation and the coping strategies employed to facilitate the overall adjustment process. This study examined the lived experiences of the male accompanying partner and his adaptation to a nontraditional role, in order to provide an understanding of the work–family life balance issues and its impact created by this new arrangement. This study explored the lived experiences of accompanying partners in their role either as a dual family earner or as one whose female partner is the primary breadwinner.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were used as a guide for this study:

1. How do males in dyadic partnerships conceptualize their role and coping strategies as accompanying partners attempting to adapt to a nontraditional role:
   
   a. As an individual;
   
   b. As a member of the partnership;
   
   c. Within the context of family and extended family relations;
   
   d. As a member of the community?
2. How do gender role ideologies and gendered expectations influence the male accompanying partner’s ability to adapt?

**Significance of Study**

This study set out to explore the subjective role and world view of male accompanying partners’ perception of their dyadic partnerships, their respective familial bonds, and their role in the community at large. The study also explored ill-founded assumptions and misconceptions inherent within gender-based rationalities surrounding the role of accompanying partners, dual earners, and caregivers. Gathering the narratives of the male accompanying partners as they adapt to a nontraditional or atypical role, and analyzing, comparing, and contrasting the results have contributed to the existing academic literature on this subject. Gaining insight into the challenges that male accompanying partners confront and sharing the stories that detail their stress of coping in adapting to expanded nontraditional roles, have also contributed to existing base of knowledge in this area. This study of the male accompanying partner phenomenon involves issues of adaptation and coping, with implications and potential benefits for human resource professionals, researchers and scholars in sociology, psychology, social work and the business community (Braseby, 2010).

**Assumptions**

Many external factors can influence who becomes a male accompanying partner. This study focused mainly on the perspectives of males and how they adapted and coped in their new role within the partnership, as opposed to how they managed external factors (temporary layoff, discharge, or economic downturn) over which they may not have had control. The study targeted qualifying participants whose female partners fell within
certain social, educational, and economic boundaries and whose decision to assume the role of accompanying partner was voluntary. Therefore, this study proceeded on the basis of the following assumptions:

   a) The male accompanying partners at the focus of this research are in dyadic partnerships with female partners who are classified as professionals. According to the United States Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division, a professional is one who is employed in a “bona fide professional capacity” and “whose primary duty is the performance of work requiring knowledge of an advanced type…of learning customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction” (Section 541.300).

   b) The male accompanying partners have voluntarily assumed the role of accompanying partner.

   c) The interpretation of the narrative data collected accurately reflects the perceptions of the participating respondents.

Limitations

The following may limit this research in a number of ways including:

1) a criterion sampling of a minimum of 10 and no more than 12 qualifying males (which could limit the generalizability of its findings); 2) the potential for researcher bias and the limitations inherent in a narrative study, including the lack of control over the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of the participants/interviewees.

Delimitations

This study was delimited by the researcher in the following ways: 1) the study explored the experiences of male accompanying partners who have voluntarily assumed
that role, and whose female partners are classified as professionals. 2) The selection of the male accompanying partners was generated from a combination of sources that include the social media, and snowball or chain leads referred to the researcher by individuals who were aware of others who meet the study’s criteria.

**Definition of Terms**

An *Accompanying Partner* is a term that has evolved from and is sometimes used interchangeably with the original term, *trailing partner*, both of which are used when referring to the partner who trails the primary hire to another location (Braseby, 2010).

*Dyadic Partnership* is the relationship between two people; for the purposes of this study, a relationship between a married or cohabiting male and female.

**Chapter Summary**

The first chapter consisted of an introduction of the proposed research topic by way of a vignette of one of the participants as a means of laying out the framework for the study. The purpose and significance of the study was presented identifying previously unanswered questions and gaps in the literature. Certain theories relative to adaptation and coping congruence provided avenues for uncovering answers to the proposed research questions through a qualitative narrative inquiry methodology. In so doing, it was the expectation of the researcher that by exploring, chronicling, and analyzing the narratives of the lived experiences of male accompanying partners, a more comprehensive understanding of this nontraditional role would be facilitated. As a result, a significant gap in the existing knowledge involving this phenomenon could be filled. The next chapter provides a review of the relevant literature on the evolution of the male accompanying partner phenomenon, and the historical perspectives.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter two is a literature review, which covers historical perspectives and the socio-evolution of this phenomenon, along with explication of certain applicable theories. Tracing the history of this phenomenon and examining the current, pertinent literature should serve to contextualize and enhance the understanding of this phenomenon.

This chapter explored and reviewed the literature on the adaptation of male accompanying partners to a nontraditional role in dyadic partnerships. At the outset, a review of the traditional nuclear family and its transition into a postmodern social unit is presented to provide a context in which to examine the male accompanying partner phenomenon. The second section provided historical background on the emergence of the phenomenon of dual earners and issues related to the challenges of work-life balance. The third part focused on the male accompanying partner within the United States in relation to gender role ideologies and gender-based expectations. Finally, the academic and professional literature relating to the male’s adaptation to the nontraditional role of accompanying partner and coping strategies was reviewed.

Historical Perspectives

The Changing Face of the American Workforce Over the past four decades, women’s Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) has steadily increased. As of June, 2012, women comprised nearly 48% of the total workforce, accounting for 52% of all workers in professional, management, and related occupations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). As women have moved into the workforce, the American family structure has also undergone significant changes (Shapiro, Ingols, O’Neill, & Blake-Beard, 2009).
The changing family structure is intricately related to the changing position of women in the workforce, a trend that has grown at a rapid pace in recent years with influences that will endure for the foreseeable future (Gerson, 1983). Traditionally, the work model for men was full-time, uninterrupted employment, while also being unencumbered with the burdens of other life domains (Halrynjo, 2009). This hegemonic construct, one that has permeated American society for decades as part of the nuclear family mindset, continues to hold sway (Braseby, 2010; Coltrane, 1998; Kimmel, 2011) despite the dynamics of a changing workforce in which the number of women almost parallels that of men.

The changing nature of the family unit and the shift away from the traditional nuclear family can be attributed to increased opportunities for women in the workforce, changing values such as flexible gender roles, and expanded access to information about sexuality and birth control (Gerson, 2010; Kimmel, 2011). In sum, shifting attitudes, behavioral trends, and different values have created the emergence of a more complex perception of the postmodern family (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). The composition of the American family of the 1970s and 1980s assumed a multiplicity of forms with the increased arrival of women in the workforce, which included better wages, better education, improved housing, more leisure time, and more flexible gender roles (Kimmel, 2011). The dynamic changes associated with the Women’s Movement and the entry of women into the workforce in growing numbers reignited the debate about the erosion of the erstwhile traditional nuclear family (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001).

The image of the postmodern family structure is dynamic and has changed in numerous ways, not the least of which includes cohabiting partners of the opposite sex, or
same sex, with or without children, cohabiting families, single mothers with children, single fathers with children, stepfamilies, and other family units with ambiguous boundaries (Brown & Manning, 2009). Unlike earlier assumptions about what constitutes a family, the contemporary structure of the family unit is more flexible, fluid, shifting, and egalitarian (Bielby & Bielby, 1992). Thus, the current generation of children may have a wholly different perception of the family construct than that of previous generations (Gerson, 2010).

**The Rise of Dual Earners.** As men’s wages began to decline and women increasingly entered the workforce, dual earning couples became more a necessity rather than a matter of choice (Roehling, Moen, & Batt, 2003). According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2012), among married couples with children under the age of 18 years old, in 2011, close to 59 percent were categorized as dual income earners. Regardless of the composition of the contemporary or postmodern family, the majority of today’s households are based upon two incomes (Harvey & Wiese, 1998; U.S. Department of Labor, 2012).

In her research, Gerson (2010) warned against the presupposition that having dual incomes protects a couple from parental or marital discontent. A review of a significant number of studies on dual earners, both in the United States and in other countries where the dual-earner phenomenon is viewed as a critical issue, found that the discussion regularly revolved around work-family conflicts and/or work–family life balance issues (Harvey & Wiese, 1998; Wierda-Boer, Gerris, & Vermulst, 2008).

Work–family life balance, or work–family life conflict, became a separate arena for research in the 1960s and 1970s, focusing on dual-career families and especially
working mothers (Jenkins-Perry, Repetti, & Crouter, 2004). Regardless of the composition of the household, when dual earning couples could not balance the demands of their paid jobs with household needs, being caught in the web of such work-family conflicts often brought about stresses in the relationship (Gerson, 2010). For example, in dual-earner households, while men and women may be approaching parity in pay and occupational status in the workplace, disparity still generally exists with respect to household roles, which can be a source of conflict (Selmer & Leung, 2003). Likewise, domestic tensions may arise stemming from issues of caretaking, apportionment of household duties, and relative contributions to financial obligations (Gerson, 2010).

Although work–family life conflict typically refers to balancing of roles between the two domains of home and work, conflict between the partners can exist within each of these domains in terms of domestic tasks. The overwhelming consensus in the literature suggests that a greater sense of personal satisfaction and well-being exists when work-life balance predominates and conflicts are kept at minimal levels (Slan-Jerusalim & Chen, 2009).

The Male Accompanying Partner

Although Male accompanying partners are confronted with unique challenges, most published studies in previous decades have focused on the challenges faced by women trailing their husbands on international assignments. However, men are increasingly assuming the supportive role of accompanying partners, and relocation has become much more prevalent within the borders of the United States as more men are becoming accompanying partners, sometimes sacrificing their career to be supportive partners (Reed and Cook, 2000).
A male accompanying partner who relocates with his female partner in a nontraditional role may feel adversely affected in terms of their careers, self-identity, and self-esteem, which can produce added stress within the family (Selmer & Leung, 2003). If he is not working in his chosen career field, he may experience difficulty in adjusting as an unemployed spouse, unless he has already adapted to being a house-husband or a stay-at-home dad (McNulty & Boyko, 2004; Selmer & Leung, 2003). Once relocated, if the male accompanying partner is unemployed, feelings of frustration and anxiety may arise, about his career, which may lead to resentment against his spouse. This is particularly likely if he behaves competitively, comparing his situation to that of his partner, thereby generating additional stress on the dyadic partnership (Gerson, 2010; Selmer & Leung, 2003; Silberstein, 1992).

Societal pressures in the United States make male partners feel compelled to work as a way of fitting into society. Based upon traditional gender expectations, work is viewed in America as a necessary component of a person’s self-concept, which defines one’s self-image. Being employed provides a type of emotional support that assures the worker of his personal worth and value to society (Juntunen, 2006; Selmer & Leung, 2003). Transitioning to a new environment, typically a significant life-changing event, can be especially stressful for individuals undergoing a role-reversal. This is especially true under conditions that require uprooting the family, surrendering a job and the fellowship of colleagues, and, in the process, leaving behind relatives and friends. These issues, combined with the pressure of securing new employment, all present enormous challenges and are potential stressors for both partners (Ashforth & Saks, 1995; Harvey & Wiese, 1998; Hendershott, 1995).
Gender Role Theory

Enormous challenges produced by gendered expectations are beginning to confront women and men alike as they seek to balance their career and family lives. A social disparity is common in American society in which women have been pressured to choose between a career and family, while no such imposition has traditionally been placed on men. This became an issue following the entry of substantial numbers of women into the U.S. workforce. Traditionally, men are seldom questioned about their willingness to forego a family in order to pursue a career (Schreiber, 1998). Even in the twenty-first century, concerns persist among women surrounding the burdens and stresses of competing with work and family demands (Slan-Jerusalim & Chen, 2009). As both males and females adhere to their traditional belief systems, a distinction should be made between the conventional and the more egalitarian approach characteristic of modern society. The particular philosophy to which individuals cling is largely dependent upon how they were socialized by their parents or guardians (Epstein, 1988; Gerson, 2010; Ickes, 1981, Sidanius, 1991). Socializing men in a philosophy that encourages them to prove their masculinity through a traditional “breadwinner role” can impose a strain when they fail to live up to those expectations (Barnett, Marshall & Pleck, 1992). Hence, depending on the relative social orientation brought to the partnership, it will tend to thrive or perish based on the strength of the bond between the partners (Ickes, 1985).

Influence of Gender

Challenges facing accompanying partners of both sexes are similar in nature. However, for the male accompanying partner, some differences exist, many of which revolve around gender ideologies and expectations (Hendershot, 1995; McNulty &
Boyko, 2004; Reed & Cook, 2000; Selmer & Leung, 2003). As an example, it should be noted that some male and female dual earners adhere to a traditional view of family and responsibilities, whereas others embrace a more egalitarian ideology (Gerson, 2010; Harvey & Wiese, 1998). A man who espouses a traditional gender role philosophy views himself not only as the primary provider, but also as the decision maker, rejecting the idea of allowing his partner’s job to disrupt his own career advancement (Bielby & Bielby, 1992). By the same token, a female accompanying partner who harbors traditional beliefs about herself as the homemaker and housewife may tend to make the necessary sacrifice of her career advancement rather than impede her husband’s advancement (Bielby & Bielby, 1992; Hendershott, 1995).

McNulty and Boyko (2004) analyzed survey data from 21 males, as well as interviews with nine additional male accompanying partners worldwide to compare and contrast how male and female accompanying partners make role adjustments. Their findings revealed the following: 1) work was the primary rationale for relocating regardless of gender; 2) the majority of the men possessed a bachelor’s or master’s degree and were less likely to agree to give up their careers; 3) if the male accompanying spouse was a house-husband prior to relocating, or if he felt it was his partner’s “turn,” role reversal was viewed as positive and the partners embraced egalitarian or nontraditional beliefs; 4) male and female accompanying spouses who had no children found it difficult to establish a support network, while having a supportive spouse exceeded other success criteria for both genders; 5) the male spouses prioritized the need to have up-to-date, accurate information in advance of any relocation; 6) males felt a sense of resentment about how they were treated by their partner’s employer; 7) while
accompanying female partners felt a greater sense of buy-in relative to their partner, they also harbored more resentment toward their husband’s decision to relocate. However, male partners felt a greater sense of commitment toward the partnership than to the career of their spouse; 8) lastly, the greatest challenge confronting the male partner was adapting to the nontraditional role of being a male accompanying partner (McNulty & Boyko, 2004).

The above study was conducted for the purpose of providing sponsoring organizations with a sense of the collective sentiments of expatriates following a job-related relocation. However, several aspects of the study and its analysis are beneficial in informing the proposed study, specifically by providing a future frame of reference for the examination of related gender role, coping, and adaptation theories.

**Adaptation Theory**

The majority of studies addressing adaptation have approached it from the perspective of female accompanying partners, and generally in the context of cross-cultural experiences inherent in international migration (Braseby, 2010; Caligiuri et al., 1999; Harvey & Wiese, 1998; McNulty & Boyko, 2004; Promin, 2011). However, relatively few articles have been published that treat the subject of adaptation from the perspective of the male accompanying partner (Braseby, 2010). Studies have been conducted by some researchers, particularly Gerson (2002), on the reactions by male accompanying partners to work-life changes of women; yet little research data have been produced in which male accompanying partners provide a narration of their adaptation to a nontraditional role from the male perspectives (Atkinson, 1998; Josselson & Lieblich, 2002; Simon, 2011).
Several studies exist on female accompanying partners in connection with their acceptance of international employment and their adaptation to a foreign culture (Harvey & Wiese, 1998; McNulty, 2005; McNulty & Boyko, 2004; Hendershott, 1995). As with any relocation or transition, a period of adjustment or adaptation to the new environment is necessary. Adaptation goes well beyond acclimation to a new culture, although an understanding of adaptation in a cultural context can be an enriching source of knowledge to apply to other facets of one’s experiences. Relocation and migration are stressful events that require a period of adjustment and may have either a short-term or long-term effect on one’s subjective sense of well-being (Luhmann, Hofmann, Eid, & Lucas, 2012).

While some studies have focused on the cultural adjustments involved in transitioning to a foreign country, some researchers have expanded their study of the adaptive process to expose other philosophical subtleties. For example, in 1960, Kalervo Oberg, an anthropologist, coined the phrase “culture shock” to describe the anxiety that occurs when a person encounters a new environment and tries to adapt to unexpected circumstances or the trauma of unfamiliar events (Oberg, 1964; Petersen, 1995). The extent to which an individual effectively adapts to a new environment is dependent not only on the physical change and intercultural impact of the change, but also on the psychosocial effects associated with trying to adapt to a change in one’s social environment (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Psychological issues associated with changing life roles and adapting to a new environment can profoundly affect the ultimate success or failure of the transferee’s assignment and, indirectly, the familial relationship.
When transitioning from one role to another, often ambiguity exists relative to the roles. Black (1988) posits the following hypotheses that have applicability to this study: a) The greater the role ambiguity, the more difficult the transition becomes; b) the greater the ambiguity of the role, the less likely it is that adjustment to specific work-life duties will occur; and c) the greater the role overload, the less the degree of adjustment to the responsibilities that role dictates. These hypotheses have significant application to work-life conflict issues, and by extension, to transitioning and adapting to a new role as an accompanying spouse.

Black’s study on role adaptation provides a logical backdrop for a discussion of a survey conducted in 2004 by the Interchange Institute on behalf of Prudential Financial entitled Many Women Many Voices. One of the goals of the study was to understand family adaptation as key to a successful relocation by an employee. Although the study produced a number of significant results, it revealed a few unique findings that are particularly relevant. A mere 6.2% of expatriate husbands consulted their accompanying spouses before the decision to move was made. In addition, 28.3% of the wives expressed that their expatriate husbands had greater influence than they did as accompanying partners in making the important decision to relocate. On the other hand, women who were either consulted by their spouses’ employer or did not feel pressured to relocate felt involved in the decision and were able to adjust more easily (Copeland, 2004; Harvey & Wiese, 1998). The Prudential study provided a number of interesting results primarily from the perspective of women, decision making and voluntariness of relocation. Some of the questions posed in the survey provided useful surveys that can be utilized in the interviews of male accompanying partners in the present study.
**Congruence Theory**

Congruence theory was originally articulated in the psychological literature amid concern about health-related issues involving stress and effective coping. Many aspects of congruence theory are applicable to the behavior of male accompanying partners, particularly as they experience transitioning between roles. Coping refers to behavior that individuals engage in to protect themselves from psychological harm produced by certain social conditions, or to mediate the impact of stressful experiences (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). “Coping includes the cognitive, emotional, or behavioral strategies, which are used to adjust to the stressful situation” (Hardie, 2005, p. 26). When individuals perceive a situation as “threatening, demanding, or challenging,” stress may be induced. When in a new environment, in an unfamiliar situation, or when confronted with a potentially life-changing event, a major part of the adaptation process involves using coping strategies to minimize stress. However, using the wrong coping mechanism can be ineffective and exacerbate an already uncomfortable situation in mismatched domains. In addition, what may appear highly threatening or stressful to one individual may be insignificant to another (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

Hardie (2005) conducted a study in which coping sources and styles were examined among 237 participants. The study revealed the existence of a high level of stress in the individual (I) domain, that is, the internal struggle. However, a moderate amount of stress was revealed in the relational (R) stress area, which refers to interaction with others in their domain or environment; and a moderate amount of stress was found in the collective (C) stress area, referring to coping within the family system and in relation to the community at large. “Cognitive-relational theory defines stress as a
particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 19). Stated differently, individuals are stressed by those things that they perceive to be overly taxing, thereby threatening their overall welfare.

In analyzing how men and women cope with normative role strain as marital partners and/or parents, Pearlin and Schooler (1978) differentiated between psychological resources, referring to qualities of personality (who people are) and coping responses, referring to the behaviors and perceptions of individuals (what people do). Whether psychological resources or coping responses are employed is largely dependent on the specific set of situational stressors with which one is confronted. The tripartite model, derived from the study by Hardie (2005), which examines the Individual, Relational, and Collective aspects of coping, coupled with the research of Pearlin and Schooler (1978) on coping structure, provide an excellent background for the analysis of data collected as an integral part of the adaptation process.

In addition to coping with, and adapting to their nontraditional role, male accompanying partners in dual-earner households are also confronted with issues related to work-life balance or work-life conflict depending on the lens through which they are viewed. While past studies have provided an understanding of the dynamics involved in balancing life roles as a significant issue to women (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002), work-life balance is not just a women’s issue. This remains true despite extensive bias, despite the fact that immense bias and stereotypes that still exist surrounding women’s and men’s roles at home and work (Gerson, 2010). Conflict theory suggests that juggling multiple, and perhaps conflicting, roles at home and work can cause stress to
men and women alike, possibly causing them to be ineffective in both domains (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Lee & Phillips, 2006).

The expansionist theory of gender, family, and work introduced by Barnett and Hyde (2001) suggests that balancing multiple roles could foster healthier relationships in the home environment while also contributing to career advancement. In essence, the expansionist theory can be viewed as a positive response to conflict theory in that it suggests that multiple roles are actually more beneficial to dual earner partnerships, although the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Lee & Phillips, 2006). Even Barnett and Hyde (2001), who recognized the benefits of multiple roles, noted that if the quantity of the roles becomes overwhelming, distress may occur. Nevertheless, the upside remains that multiple roles are generally beneficial to females and males alike, as well as to the overall health of their relationship (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Male accompanying partners are now being confronted with issues that had previously been associated with women (Harvey & Wiese, 1998). A recent Pew Research poll revealed a convergence of roles as fathers in dual-earner households are taking on more housework and child care and mothers are increasingly working outside the home (Parker & Wang, 2013).

Chapter Summary

This literature review has provided the foundation for studying the phenomenon known as the male accompanying partner. To some degree the male accompanying partner phenomenon can be attributed to the erosion of the role of men as primary breadwinner and the diminishing desire by women to fill the traditional role of homemaker and caregiver. With the changing workforce in America and the continuing struggle for dominance within the household, the traditional family structure is gradually
being replaced with a postmodern family structure. The male accompanying partner, therefore, must now adapt to this nontraditional role or a combination of roles as dual earner, stay-at-home husband or dad, and/or as homemaker and caregiver. This study explores the challenges of gendered expectations, adaptation, and the strategies of accompanying partners. Additionally, coping congruence theories are presented as a framework for understanding how male accompanying spouses manage their expanded domestic roles.

Chapter 3 explains the research design and methodology used to explore the participants’ experiences as part of the data collection process.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological approach and research methods used in conducting this study. The purpose of this research was to explore and analyze the “lived experiences” of male accompanying partners and their adaptation to a nontraditional role from the following perspectives: 1) as an individual; 2) as a partner in a dyadic partnership (male accompanying partner and/or dual earner); 3) as a husband, father, caregiver, family member, and friend; and 4) as a member of the broader community. The research questions are as follows:

1. How do males in dyadic partnerships perceive their role, and what are their coping strategies as accompanying partners attempting to adapt to a nontraditional role?

2. How do shifting gendered expectations impact the male accompanying partner’s ability to adapt?

Rationale for Adopting Qualitative Methodology

Although numerous definitions have been put forth to describe qualitative research, one particularly apt description has been provided by Denzin and Lincoln (2005): “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (p. 3). Whereas quantitative research typically seeks internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity, its qualitative counterpart establishes its own rigor through the application of such unique terminologies as credibility, authenticity, dependability, transferability, and confirmability as foundations for trustworthiness in the study (Creswell, 2007; Eisner, 1991; Kazdin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally,
although both quantitative and qualitative research originates from “basic observations and curiosity,” qualitative research prompts the researcher to look deeply into the participants’ world and related phenomena, and the meanings they ascribe to them (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Kvale, 1996).

As its source of data, qualitative research uses natural settings in which the researcher observes and/or interviews the participants in their environment, then describes and interprets what is seen and said, while attempting to maintain empathic neutrality. The term empathic neutrality suggests an ethical stance of partnership as opposed to the detached and traditional neutrality that is characteristic of the scientific milieu in the context of history, politics, and social action (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Hoepfl, 1997; Patton, 1990). The researcher seeks to interpret the data collected and the meaning ascribed to the phenomena by the participants, and then presents their perspectives in rich, thick text (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009).

A more broadly defined explanation of qualitative research has been provided by Strauss and Corbin (1990), who refer to it as “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification.” Simply put, qualitative research involves the interpretation of data that is nonnumeric (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Kim, 2006). Qualitative research allows for meaningful exploration of issues that reflect the reality of individuals’ perceptions, feelings, and actions (Creswell, 2007). It also facilitates the interpretation of the meanings generated through the study, contextualizing the findings rather than making sweeping generalizations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).
Some of the more salient advantages associated with this approach include: 1) exploring a topic in which theories are not available to adequately explain the participant behavior; 2) greater authenticity and richness of research through observing and interviewing the participants in their natural setting; 3) enhanced understanding by the audience through recording the unique stories of participants; and 4) eliciting responses to questions that are broad in scope (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Kim, 2006).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that in order to ensure that readers gain an understanding of a studied phenomenon, information should be provided in the context in which such phenomena are normally experienced. This study seeks to combine evidence that demonstrates credibility and that generates confidence about what has been observed, interpreted, and concluded (Eisner, 1991).

**Narrative Inquiry as Research Method**

Narrative inquiry, one type of qualitative research method, involves collecting information on human events or phenomena to produce rich, descriptive, and comprehensible stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). “Whereas a narrative study reports the life of a single individual, a phenomenological study describes the meaning for the lived experiences of a phenomenon by several individuals” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Narrative inquiry provides a way of delving into the lives of the persons to be observed and the opportunity to interview them in their natural settings. Narrative inquiry is the study of lived experiences understood through a narrative, one that shapes new theoretical meanings of people’s experiences (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). As a method, narrative starts with experiences revealed in the life stories of the individual participants/interviewees, presented in a way that helps the reader to understand the
phenomena under consideration (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006). The participant/interviewee perspective should be revealed from their frame of reference, what Marshall and Rossman (2011) refer to as the *emic* perspective, rather than the *etic*, or researcher’s perspective.

Narrative researchers invite interviewees to relate their stories and frame the interview by posing structured interview questions about a phenomenon and associated issues to be studied; engaging the interviewee in conversation; or telling stories sparked by certain artifacts (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). This process requires not only diligent preparation in advance of interviewing, but also knowledge about what is “storyworthy” within the narrator’s social milieu.

In narrative research, the life story of the individual is at the heart of the process, presented in the person’s own words with an emphasis on certain events or lived experiences (Plummer, 2001). Those lived experiences may include coping, adapting, and working through *critical life events* moving from major events to less significant ones (Erikson, 1982; Plummer, 2001, p. 129). It can be said that narrative inquiry is a tool of research that is driven primarily by an event or series of events, or by key components in people’s lives, which enable them to recall the experiences in their lives (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Thinking in narrative terms about the phenomenon is necessary throughout the process from the framing of the research, to extensive field interviews and recording field notes, to ultimately composing the research text (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

Since this research study reveals the male accompanying partners’ unique cognitive representations of their nontraditional role, a research design encompassing a
phenomenological approach can facilitate meaningful discovery while developing a holistic understanding of the phenomena as suggested by van Manen, 1990. The narratives to be portrayed in this study were based on the unique “individual stories” garnered from male accompanying partners. In reporting the stories of male accompanying partners, the researcher was able to interpret these experiences through *intuiting* and rigorous *examination* of the subjects, objects, or people’s lived experiences, behaviors, and actions (Husserl, 1931).

**Role of the Researcher**

Humans are the chosen instruments for naturalistic or qualitative inquiry because they are best able to interact with different situations, such as collecting information on various levels, processing it instantly, and quickly giving feedback (Eisner, 1991; Hoepfl, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Narrative researchers should be able to discern the context of the stories presented, recognize that they should situate individual stories within the personal experiences of participants (their jobs, and homes), their culture (race, ethnicity, religiosity), and their historical contexts (time and place) (Creswell, 2007).

In conducting qualitative research, a degree of subjectivity can be assumed as the researcher is the prime source for data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). However, in order to ensure a degree of objectivity as a participant-observer, the researcher should refrain from permitting any potential foreshadowing of the data acquired, so that any interpretation accurately reflects the experiences of the study’s participants (Smith, 2007). Thus, the researcher must exercise an inordinate measure of restraint. Marshall & Rossman (2011) caution that the observer who is also the investigator can affect what is
observed, underscoring that the ideal is to remain as objective as possible in order not to “contaminate” the study. Therefore, caution dictates that the researcher/interviewer not only capture the essence of the participants’ responses to queries during the interviewing/observation process, but also write a “facsimile” of key episodes along with “interpretive commentary,” (Stake, 1995). Accordingly, conducting member checks, which affords the participants an opportunity to confirm their narratives, was an indispensable step after analyzing the interview data in order to preserve the study’s authenticity and integrity.

The researcher’s role is to make meaning out of the pure experiences of the participants, uncontaminated by leading questions (Kvale, 1996), and to make the connection between what is observed and the conclusions drawn from the research report, a task requiring a firm grasp of the research paradigm (Hoepfl, 1997). Moreover, the researcher should strive to ensure that the narrative study unveils the story in the form of chronological experiences in personal, relational, communal, and historical contexts, unfolding the themes of their lived experiences with rich description (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Hardie, 2005).

Ideally, this methodology involves the researcher and the participants working collaboratively to foster a sense of mutual understanding in which the researcher upholds an obligation to report honestly, while the participant honors the obligation to tell his story honestly (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995). This mutual bond is referred to by Blumenfeld-Jones as fidelity, which includes the characteristics of betweenness (relating to the relationship between the participant and researcher) and believability (referring to
the combined efforts of the participant and researcher to present the story to a third constituent in a manner that is a realistic portrayal that resonates with the audience).

Figure 1. The interrelationships among researcher, storyteller, and audience
Qualitative researchers study acknowledges that the data to be collected will be filtered through the lens of the philosophy, principles, biases, and the sum total of the experiences accumulated and brought to the study (Kim, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Ultimately, the researcher not only becomes aware of the dimensions that characterize the participants’ lived experiences, but also connects the audience to the sum total of the experiences of all stakeholders by communicating what their narratives intended to capture (Plummer, 2005).

Numerous conversations with a male accompanying partner and his spouse initially made the researcher aware of this phenomenon, and provided an abundance of firsthand information about psychological and emotional experiences associated with this trend.

Previous experience serving as human resources overseer of a state government department positioned the researcher to gain insight into some of the general work-life issues addressed in this study, as well as the challenges related to male accompanying partners in particular. Additional experiences that qualify the researcher to conduct the current study include the successful completion of the Collaborative Institutional Training Institute (CITI), a comprehensive research ethics education program that provided extensive guidelines for researchers conducting research involving human subjects.

Selection of Participants

In qualitative inquiry no specific rules for sample size predominate, since the sample size is dependent on what the researcher wants to know, the stated purpose, its usefulness, and the resources available to conduct the study with credibility and without
redundancy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). In a narrative study, the researcher should focus more on whom to sample, but the only requirements are that all of the participants have actually experienced the phenomenon being studied and should have stories to tell about their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007).

In recruiting participants, leads included member referrals, snowball or chain leads developed through social networks, and individuals who were aware of others who met the study’s criteria and were willing to share stories of their lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Advertisements seeking potential participants were placed in print and social media outlets. Table 1 below provides a summary of the demographics of the sample participants. Despite its limited size, and although race and religion were not factors considered in identifying the pool of participants, nor factors specifically explored in selecting participants, the sample did produce a degree of diversity.

Data Collection

For the purpose of this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 male accompanying partners who shared their narratives about the phenomenon. In-depth interviewing is the most appropriate method when knowledge is sought that might not ordinarily be articulated by the participants, or may involve questions that elicit conflicted emotions from an otherwise homogeneous group (Johnson, 2002). The interviews consisted of open-ended questions that were semi-structured, along with follow-up questions developed during the course of the interview based upon the participants’ responses.
Interview

The interviews for this study were conducted over the course of an eight-month period with 12 participants contacted by mail or email after responding to an invitation in social media or who were referred by other qualified participants. Each of the participants voluntarily signed an Informed Consent form. Ten of the twelve interviews were conducted and recorded either in person in the comfort of the participant’s home or office, or via Skype. Two participants opted for a mutually convenient public location to discuss their experiences. Each of the participants elaborated on their respective experiences in the capacity of their role as an accompanying partner, but more importantly, all of the participants appeared eager to share their respective stories.

From the beginning, the participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Furthermore, prior to the interview, participants were given a clear explanation of the purpose of the interview’s goals. The interviews were digitally recorded and detailed, supplemental field notes were taken for future reference during the data analysis process. The interviews were then transcribed, and codified. The interview protocol, attached at Appendix A, was used as a guide for the interview, while reserving the flexibility to add or modify them depending upon the progress of the interview and the availability of the interviewee.

Data Analysis

The object of narrative analysis is the story itself. Narrative analysis “opens up forms of telling about experiences, not simply the content to which language refers” (Riessman, 2002, p. 697). The strategy for data analysis consisted of interrelated steps that explain the overall procedures and process involved in conducting this research.
After reading the interview transcripts, the comments recorded on the initial set of field notes collected from the participants who were involved throughout the sessions were then analyzed. As part of the coding process, the notes were then identified in order of importance and relevance to the overall study. Collected interview data, together with the summary notes and memos, coded field notes, and themes developed thereby, greatly facilitated the data condensation. Data Condensation is a “process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full (body) of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, documents and other empirical materials” (Miles, Huberman and Saldano, p.12).

This study followed a tri-level data coding design as derived from Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) grounded theory, later expanded by Strauss and Corbin (1990), and subsequently expounded on by scholars such as Creswell (2007), Marshall and Rossman (2011), and Merriam (2009). Open coding text was the initial step of the analytic process used, in which each line from the recorded verbatim transcripts was examined, and then organized into textual segments from which to gain meaning. The researcher remained open to any data that were potentially relevant, asking questions to determine how many times certain concepts and themes relating to the phenomenon occurred, then sorting and labeling them according to categories.

The second process was axial coding, which served to draw connections between core categories and their subsets and to synthesize the data. After developing certain clusters from the concepts and themes, relationships among the various interviews were identified, and an alignment between themes and the research questions were categorized to reflect commonalities among codes while discarding outliers.
Selective coding was the third level of the data analysis, during which key categories, propositions, and storylines were developed. Selective coding was used, in part, to support the focus of this research along with other relevant data obtained from literature and documents that complemented the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2007). In conjunction with this process, the researcher used the qualitative data analysis software package known as NVivo10, which facilitated the formation of the narrative study database. NVivo10 enabled the researcher to better access, classify, manage and analyze the collected data in the intended contexts. In addition, utilizing this innovative software helped to expedite the construction and organization of the data, while still allowing for flexibility.

The researcher’s analysis of the participants’ stories, restructuring the narratives in order to bring forth meaning and “restorying” them into a meaningful and comprehensive framework, were key procedural requirements in conducting this narrative inquiry.

Credibility and Validity

Qualitative research establishes rigor through the application of its own unique terminologies such as credibility, authenticity, dependability, transferability, and confirmability as collectively forming the foundations for trustworthiness (Creswell, 2007; Eisner, 1991; Kazdin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to establish validity the researcher questioned whether the findings from this study actually mirrored reality, which sometimes can never genuinely be captured (Merriam, 2009). In order to assess the veracity of the findings and ensure that the study was credible, the researcher adhered to the following steps:
1) Collected rich, thick, descriptive data from the participants through in-depth interviews about the male accompanying partner phenomenon; described the circumstances of the participants and the setting, and interpreted the meaning of their storied experiences.

2) Shared data with the respective participants for validation or confirmation as part of an informal checking process to ensure credibility and verify their intentions; corrected any miscommunication, misinterpretations, or factual errors; acquired additional or clarifying information, which provided an opportunity to summarize and more accurately assess the collected data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3) Used a peer review process in which another practitioner holding a Ph.D. in Education and familiar with the study assessed the data’s validity.

4) Reviewed the findings from the study of the phenomenon from multiple perspectives; an approach that researchers refer to as crystallization (Richardson, 1991).

5) Facilitated data analysis through the use of the qualitative software package, NVivo.

**Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of male accompanying partners and investigate the coping strategies they employed as they adapted to their nontraditional role. In order to effectively accomplish the goals of this research, the qualitative methodology was chosen as the most effective approach to gain insight into the perspectives of the men who experienced being a male accompanying partner. The chosen research design was narrative inquiry, selected primarily because it provided an opportunity to delve into the lives of participants through in-depth interviews, allowing them to narrate their stories in their own voices. Further, this chapter further explained the researcher’s role in the selection of participants, the data collection process, the
anticipated interview procedures and ethical considerations, and how the collected data were coded in connection with the data analysis. Finally, a review of issues involving credibility and validity were explored as a way of the study’s reliability.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study began with the purpose of exploring the lived experiences of male accompanying partners and their adaptation to a nontraditional role. The objectives of this study were realized through the use of interviews with twelve participants who met the criteria of a male accompanying partner, and who voluntarily shared their narratives. Participants were selected who 1) have a female partner/spouse working in a professional occupation; 2) accompanied or trailed their partner to another geographical location to serve in a non-traditional, supportive capacity in support of her career; 3) either currently or has previously experienced being an accompanying partner.

Accordingly, this chapter presents data analysis from the research questions involving how participants conceptualize and adapt to their nontraditional role as an accompanying partner, together with the influence of gender roles and gendered ideology on their adaptation. The data garnered from these narratives were analyzed in a quasi-phenomenological methodological context to determine to what extent the experiences of these men mirrored the studied phenomenon and how they compared to others in the participant pool. The interviews for this study were conducted over the course of an eight-month period with 12 participants.

A thorough data analysis, which included condensing the collected data and outlining and/or displaying the study’s findings, facilitated the identification of similarities and differences that emerged in the participants’ stories. The results are presented in the respective participants’ summaries that include their general background and their narrative responses in the context of the specific research questions explored in this study. A related discussion of the themes that emerged from the narratives during the
course of the data analysis is included and a summary of the findings. Chapter 5 presents the conclusion and future implications. The condensation of data and abstracted findings enhances the likelihood that the selected stories are presented in a way that the audience is able to comprehend and relate to them. The stories contained within this study are intended to be more illustrative than exhaustive. The findings have contributed to providing answers to existing questions about this topic, thus filling a significant gap in the literature. Table 1 below provides a summary of the demographics of the sample participants.

Table 1. Demographics of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Spouse’s Job</th>
<th>Years in Partnership</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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<td>Contractor</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>Burt</td>
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<td>Christian</td>
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<td>SAHD</td>
<td>Claims Manager</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>Pediatrician</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Sales Consulting Director</td>
<td>Former Asst. Principal Doctoral Student</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>Insurance Executive</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As shown above, the participants ranged in age from 28 to 66 with a median age of 47.7, while the median number of years in the partnership was 20.3. Although race, age, and religion were not specifically factored into the participant selection criteria, their ethnic breakdown included six Caucasians, five African Americans and one Mexican American. Similarly, although religion was not a selection factor, four participants identified themselves as Christians or non-denominational, three as Catholics, two Baptists, one as Jewish, one as Agnostic, and one Atheist. In order to increase the audience’s ability to absorb the richness of the lived experiences of these participants, their perspectives will be shared and expressed in their own words free of judgmental observations. To further convey the richness of the participants’ experiences, descriptions of gestures, expressions, and intonations as observed firsthand by the researcher are shared.

Participant Summaries

Burt

“It’s great, but it’s getting old.”

Burt is a 44 year old native of Iowa who loves history and had aspirations of becoming a history teacher. After putting himself through college, he began working in a body shop until he was hired by a Fortune 500 company as an estimator. While employed there, he met his future wife, Sally, a claims executive who was promoted and relocated to Lincoln, Nebraska just one month after they had begun dating. Later, Burt decided to quit his job as an estimator and moved to Lincoln where he was able to secure a job with a different company and to be with Sally. However, after being married and living there for approximately two years, Sally received yet another promotion and they
relocated this time to Philadelphia. Since then, Sally has received additional promotions and has relocated an average of every two years in the past 13 years with Burt as the accompanying partner. When they decided to adopt a baby girl in 2006, Burt became a full time stay-at-home dad, and three years later they adopted their second child, a boy.

Burt was interviewed while in the comfort of his home during the evening hours in which he was clearly relaxed. An inquiry about the decision making process leading up to the relocation and transition to a new environment produced the following response from Burt:

[T]hey (the company) always give you the opportunity to try for this job, if it’s a promotion, or for that job if it's a lateral say, ‘Hey we're thinking about putting you here,’ but… for her career if she wants to keep going up to get to the place where she wants to be, wherever they want us to go, we'll go…The first couple moves were, you know, tough getting used to, but like I say after about the 8th or 9th one, it's pretty much old hat. So if they tell us to move, I'm like - I'm ready. So basically, when we know she's gonna get promoted, it's pretty painless; we're ready to do it and we're - now we're right on top of it.

When asked to elaborate on his sentiments about the role of accompanying his partner in connection with relocating for the sake of her career, Burt expressed the following sentiments:

I, I would say, at first I enjoyed it, uh, but that quickly, I wouldn't say quickly, but over time, even with the second one, that's kind of wearing on me a little bit where I miss earning a paycheck, earning something. I mean, I, I get a lot out of
my kids, I love my kids but I've always been, part of myself was working, you know what I mean? But I also got to the point where, uh, I didn't like moving every two years, I'm always, I'm kind of a tough person. I'm kind of an introvert where I don't, I don't mind getting new jobs, but I don't like that experience; I like staying at one place and just putting something into it, you know, and then having a year, year and a half later my wife coming home and saying ‘Hey, we're moving;' that gets kind of old quickly. So as I get older, it's getting harder.

Burt acknowledged he was not blindsided by the issue of having to relocate, having entered the marriage with eyes wide open and recognizing that relocating was an inevitable part of his wife’s upward mobility and their partnership. Therefore, he embraced it as a supportive, accompanying partner initially, and while still content to be the supportive partner, he acknowledged the frequent moves as taking its toll as he has gotten older and seen his personal dreams further deferred.

When asked about his perception of his role as accompanying partner, stay-at-home husband and father, Burt responded gleefully in this manner:

[When we decided to adopt our first child, she says well it will be you who will be the primary caregiver for that, and be the one taking care of the house and doing the laundry and all that stuff, do you have a problem with that? And I said, alright I'm gonna have to think of it as a job and that I'll have to do like I do any job - do it the best I can and I kind of treat it that way, not that I treat raising my children as a job, but I got in my mind I've got to think of it as a job, so that way I will give it 100%, you know, as in cleaning house and doing laundry and
whatever I need to, mowing the yard, doing all that stuff - I never, never once complain about it.

In responding to the pros and cons of having relocated, Burt felt that overall the experience had been positive and had provided economic stability along with the experience of a new location; moreover learning the history of new geographical areas, he also deemed as all positives. On the other hand he indicated that having grown up in a rural town, the two major negatives included lack of neighborhood space and the traffic, especially when they lived in Philadelphia. The following is how Burt characterized his sentiments about that:

You know I'd always say, ‘Hey I need to have a little space!’ I don't want to have another cookie cutter house right next to me where I could reach out and touch my neighbor’s house, like I- I- I couldn't have that; so the cons were you couldn't have that - I mean it [space] was difficult to find. Uh, I hate traffic; I can't think of anything worse than- the biggest waste of time is sitting in the car just to go five miles and it takes you a half hour. That's been a, that's a con so I hate traffic, I hate um large groups of people I don't like, like I said I'm kind of an, I like my wide open spaces so I'd have to say those are the cons.

In comparing his sense of independence prior to becoming an accompanying partner and the perception of his present role, Burt declared,

I don’t have a retirement ‘cause I’ve lived off my wife the last several years and I don’t earn an income, so I don’t have any social security coming in… I like being independent; I’ve always been independent and I miss earning a
paycheck …that’s why I said I’d like to own my own body shop someday…that’s my dream!

However, despite pointing out what he is lacking, because of his commitment to the role of accompanying partner, Burt seemed to emphasize the fact that he is not in any way resentful or regretful about his decision and state in life.

As a follow-up, Burt was posed with the question: “Has relocating adversely or positively affected you or any long term goals you may have set for yourself?” Burt provided the following narration:

Uh, professionally, yeah I mean I had a dream of someday owning my own body shop but it's a little hard to do that when you’re moving every two years. Um, I hope I can do that someday, I don't know, I hope my wife gets to the point where enough’s enough but I don’t want to be the one to say that I'm done. So I don't want to ruin her dreams like that because like I told her, I dove into this head first; I knew what was coming so who am I to jump out halfway through, so conversely. I wish, I wish she would just slow down so we could stop and then I could - I could concentrate on what I want to do, but so far she hasn't.

Burt’s very telling answer in the above response was indicative of one who sounded very committed to the dyadic partnership, and while demonstrating an unrelenting commitment to the family, candidly laments, to some degree, deferring his own dreams.

On the issue of the role that gender ideology and gendered expectations play in his attitude toward being an accompanying partner, Burt sprang at the opportunity to respond and, in the process, anticipated other questions about the perception of his role in
the context of community reaction and the primary breadwinner status of his partner by incorporating the following in his response:

To this day I get a lot of razzing for being the male guy that just stays home with the kids and follows the wife- I get a lot of it uh a lot of it's just people razzing me, but it does get to ya, you know, ha-ha, I'm not gonna lie, um there are times when I wish I wasn't that way, but I just take it in stride and say hey they’re just jealous of me that I get to stay home and my wife makes the money, and they always kid me that I got a sugar mama and stuff like that, but like I said I take it in stride… I don't know if your family is like mine, but they'll tell you what's on their mind and they tell ya so. I get a lot of it a lot of times; I get a lot of razzing about how I don't have to work and do I get an allowance - and you know, all that kind of stuff, so I get a lot of it.

It was apparent from Burt’s demeanor that he was comfortable in his own skin and his primary and unwavering focus seemingly was to do everything he could in a supportive role, to secure a loving environment for his partner and their family. On the other hand, it was also apparent from his response that he continues to harbor much optimism about one day being able to pursue his personal dreams.

We decided early on that I would give up my career for hers 'cause there was more trajectory with hers than there was with mine. Um yeah that's - I always kind of considered myself as that, I'm the support person is what I was. Whatever I gotta do to help make you do your job better is kind of what it was-so I heard about the trailing spouse thing, when she told me about it, I'm like, that perfectly
makes sense, that's what I am so...I always just thought of myself as, I'm supportive is what I was or am, really.

Based on the spontaneity and ease of response to the questions, his entire interview was seemingly permeated with a strong sense of supportiveness and commitment to the goals of the partnership and the family unit.

**Rex**

“I wasn’t prepared for it; I didn’t like it, but I did it and would do it again.”

Rex is a 55 year old African American businessman with an MBA, and the first in his family to graduate from college. Prior to assuming the role of stay-at-home dad to two boys 15 years ago, he had been working for a managed care network, a firm that interfaced with physicians and hospital administrators. His wife, Regina, is an executive in a large multinational company, and her career has been meteoric for over 20 years. Since 1999, Regina has received at least four promotions, each requiring relocation to a new geographical area. When inquiring about the decision making process, Rex had this to say:

I was the initiator more than anything. When she was promoted and the opportunity to relocate presented itself, I was one of the ones behind her saying, uh let's do this; let's get out of New Orleans, you know - and uh she wasn't so uh so much on board in the beginning. I just thought that I also could pick up in a different environment, especially after the managed care business took a nosedive in New Orleans.

Rex felt like he had to encourage Regina to accept the invitation by the company to relocate. However, what he thought might have been a decision made by the two of
them, as partners, did not end there. Yet another element had to be considered, namely, her family. As Rex commented, “Somewhere along the lines I kind of convinced her that she should seize that opportunity, but she had to convince her family.”

Since the initial relocation occasioned by his wife’s acceptance of a promotion, Rex has become a licensed insurance agent, but has not had the opportunity to firmly supplant his career in the insurance industry due to the frequency of relocating as an accompanying partner.

I was immediately thrust into the uh position of Mr. Mom somewhat, so I kind of filled my role with taking care of that business and being mindful that she (Regina) had agreed to and had committed to something that took her out of the house immediately.

In describing his new role and his typical day, Rex provided the following: It was something I wasn’t prepared for, but basically it meant getting up early prior to the kids, getting them ready to go off to school, preparing them clothing-wise, breakfast-wise to um get ready for school and on a strict time level to catch the bus. And my youngest son, I had to drive him to his um uh preschool and kindergartens…so my typical day was getting my kids prepared til about 9 a.m. and trying to figure out what I was gonna do with the rest of my day and then uh somewhere around 3 o'clock, getting prepared for them to come home, take care of uh dinner plans. It’s a good thing I’m from New Orleans and I love to cook, uh 'cause that played well in uh my role and Tulsa wasn't a place known for food, so it was best that you bring your own mindset of food there.
Um any homework, any after school activities—I became a baseball coach; I became a soccer coach; I took the kids to swimming lessons; I attended various boy scouts and other types of meetings for gifted and talented after class programs, uh so uh that that proceeded for the first year almost while I was trying to figure out what I was gonna do. One great thing that did occur, I was able to finish my MBA in ecommerce while in Tulsa.

When asked to describe his personal feelings about functioning in that non-traditional role, Rex was very clear and unequivocal about the fact that he initially saw their move as an opportunity for him as well. He viewed their decision as a chance to escape his previous environment and land in one “where I could take the mantle and role of the leading spouse in our relationship, and what I mean is by leading financially.” In further elaborating on the role of leader Rex clarified,

I was geared and raised to uh take on that role and the career path was going to be my path. I was confident enough to support her, but I definitely did that with hopes that I would assume the leading role again financially in the house as primary breadwinner. I was not geared psychologically to assume the role that I did, but I’m a team player, so I understood what I had to do. I didn’t like it, but I did it.

Touching on the issue of gendered ideology and expectations, Rex seemed to place enormous emphasis on the fact that any male who found himself similarly situated as an accompanying partner had to be a confident individual because of the implications of the shifted role.
For a guy like me, Mr. Mom wasn't enough. I wasn't gonna be a Mr. Mom. Even though I know some guys who are very comfortable in that position, and they’re confident guys, but it wasn't enough for me. I wanted to do more; I knew I could contribute more and I wanted to find a pathway - So if I had to tell my sons I reared them to be the primary breadwinners, but if they find themselves in the situation like I did, I would tell them to play the best hand, which is what I ended up doing.

When asked whether his feelings upon initially assuming his nontraditional role were the same then as they are now, Rex explained that it was an evolutionary process. If you don’t mind cooking, ironing, cleaning, and other chores around the house on a temporary basis, and recognize that it is for the good of the family, then you can manage it if you have self-confidence; but if you lack self-confidence, I think this may not be a role for such a man and could present special challenges to the marriage. Yes, it took a while to adjust or adapt, but I eventually began to look at the overall goal as sort of leading from behind.

Hearing the expression “leading from behind” instantly prompted a request for clarification, to which Rex responded by juxtaposing that postmodern phrase, which he apparently had coined, to the traditional leading man role in the family.

All of my life I have been indoctrinated with the notion that men lead the family in every aspect, but to learn to lead from behind is a special challenge that requires a broader mentality that is quite different from uh, traditional thinking, you might say. You have to be resourceful and keep reminding yourself of the ultimate goal being the survival of the family. That’s what drove me to do what I
did; I gave up the role of primary breadwinner, but did not relinquish my role as head of the household.

In characterizing his role as husband, Rex spoke in glowing and complimentary terms about his wife, indicating how fortunate he is to have an understanding partner who is astute enough to recognize his sacrifice and that she respects him “across the board.”

More specifically, Rex went on to expand on his comment stating:

There are no emasculating issues here, or some notion that because she’s the primary breadwinner that I am to assume an inferior role in the household as a man. We never go there…even though I have seen it in other relationships, uh and that is very unfortunate, so as a husband I get respect just as any husband who may be functioning as the de facto primary breadwinner.

Addressing his role as father of two African American boys was a particularly sensitive area as Rex was initially concerned about how his two sons would perceive him functioning in that role, especially considering the negative images of African American men often portrayed in the media.

Being here as a stay-at-home dad has benefitted my sons immensely. My stepson now lives with his dad, but as for my youngest, he stays focused, is not wayward or unruly and doesn’t challenge me at every turn because of my role.

Proceeding to respond to the question of his relationship to the community, Rex was quick to point out that he believes people judge others by how they conduct themselves as individuals.
I don’t hear anything other than respect for what I can contribute. I participate in a number of associations such as the homeowners’ association and community organizations that have the goal of bettering the community for our kids as individuals and our families.

As he was concluding his statement, Rex had a slight twinkle in his eyes and a grin, which seemingly signaled he had just thought about something he had neglected to mention previously. When pressed for an explanation he continued:

You sometimes hear jabs from some of my older friends about the situation, but not from folks in the new environments I’ve been in. Uh, I have been welcomed into these communities and people are more concerned about what you bring to the table or can contribute to the welfare of the community. I’ve never gotten any negative feedback due to my particular role as Mr. Mom. I remember being in the supermarket maybe about 10 years ago that was full of women, and there was me and maybe one or two other men. Now, more dads are there and you uh see them with little ones, even infants as they are doing their grocery shopping, something that used to be unheard of before. But now it is a world that I’m uh, you would say, all too familiar with now.

Rex stated that he has functioned in the capacity of an accompanying partner for well over 15 years and that his role as stay-at-home dad is the only one in which his youngest son has seen him operate.

In responding to the pros and cons of being an accompanying partner and relocating, he cited the negative impact on his personal career trajectory, especially during the first 10 years, but which he added was eventually converted into a positive.
Rex pointed out that he has now stumbled upon a niche that he actually enjoys and can perform anytime, anywhere, no matter how many more times they relocate, citing webpage designing and social media as an extremely promising arena. More importantly, he continued:

It’s like wagering a bet on her career and hoping it will ultimately pay off. Well, it has and it was well worth it for the quality time I have been able to spend with my son and it’s benefitted him because he has kept his nose clean, has a very bright future, and I’m proud to say he has now just been accepted to M-I-T.

The gleam in the eyes of this father was an indescribably paradoxical, yet unmistakably gratifying combination of pride and humility.

David

“I would do it again in a heartbeat! It never affected my manhood or made me feel less than a man because I was carrying around a diaper bag and was Mr. Momming it.”

David is a 37 year old African American and second generation practicing attorney who accompanied his wife, Mariah, also an attorney, who had been employed with a prestigious law firm. The couple relocated from Louisiana to Seattle, a city they felt was more receptive to interracial couples and biracial children. Although he had a lucrative practice in Louisiana, at the behest of Mariah, David decided to make the sacrifice and start anew in Seattle, her city of origin. He described the move as “a leap of faith,” stating that his wife and their six-week-old daughter flew to their new location while he packed a U-Haul truck and drove to join them.

David did not have any problems generally adapting to their new location,
however, he felt like the transition to the west coast was a major change for him socially and professionally, at least temporarily.

At age 37, most people’s groups of friends are set; and my wife being from here, she obviously had friends before and now it’s a matter of me integrating into her circle of friends. My closest friends from here are 1000 miles away in Los Angeles.

Notwithstanding, David remained positive and said that perhaps in another year or so, he will have established new friends. Professionally, he indicated that initially, the most challenging part of relocating was not being licensed to practice in Washington. In his own words, David shared the following sentiments:

So I mean the hardest part for me was… here I am African American male, 36 years old, went to a top tier law school, graduated with honors in trial advocacy, you know. I've received national trial awards from the National Trial Lawyers Association, uh exemplary record as a trial attorney, all these things going for me, okay? And I believed that I'd come up here and I could get a real good job as a paralegal, somewhere at a trial firm and once we got up here - that simply was not the case. No one would hire me. I went to headhunting agencies; I went all over and no one would hire me; I couldn't get an interview - I couldn't get anything. And the response I got was ‘oh you have a J.D., people expect you to get licensed. And so they’re not gonna take the time to have you even as a senior trial paralegal,’ and frankly, that didn't make any sense to me.

Um, I'm one of those guys that if Lebron James or Michael Jordan comes to me and says I'll play for your team for one year, I want them on my team for
that one year because you never know how things may go. You develop a relationship with that person or you like that person’s work ethic; you offer them a job when they become an attorney. I couldn't get anything from anybody – anything! So that was particularly difficult for me and I –I thought for sure I wasn't going to have a problem being a paralegal. You know especially with my CV, so uh of the whole transition and the whole situation that has been the hardest because literally for the last year I've been up here and been unlicensed.

Since that time, the issue of licensure has now been resolved as David proudly announced he had just received official notice during the week from the state board that he had been licensed. He went on to emphasize, however, that the other aspects of transitioning and adapting to his new environment had been relatively smooth.

In discussing his sense of independence prior to relocating as compared to the present, David immediately interpreted the question as referring explicitly to financial independence stating that although they have been financially independent, they initially took a huge step backwards with the move. He hastened to mention that he considered the move was the financially prudent thing to do because in his former venue, he never felt he could ever really “break it wide open.” On further elaborating, David clarified his comment in this manner:

Here, I feel more like the sky's the limit and, you know, I feel more like I can get at the American dream here as an attorney, more so than I ever felt like in Louisiana. I always felt like the deck - the cards were stacked against me, the deck was stacked against me, you know, even the people who would want to utilize someone like me, they wanted to see me do well, but not that well!
On the matter of his wife being the primary breadwinner,

I was never the kind of man who was bothered because my wife was making more money than me. There have been times in our relationship where I made more money than she; and there have been times in which she made more money than me, and that’s never bothered me. It never affected my manhood and I never felt less than a man in that scenario either.

In addressing personal independence, David felt everything seemed compressed in terms of time. Since his wife has a full time job, he wants to be considerate ensuring that he relieved her of as much of the pressure as possible “to keep the partnership together.” He explained that while Mariah’s passion is running in races, which has not been significantly affected by relocating, his passion, on the other hand, is automobile racing.

My passion has always been automobile racing. I haven't been since the January before my daughter was born; I haven't done any of that so uh I'll be getting back into that hopefully in the fall and, and the winter and the spring for sure, so um but everything revolves around my daughter at this point.

Initially, the couple both shared the caregiving duties for their daughter, while exploring employment possibilities. Finally, after Mariah was able to secure employment with a law firm, David took on the lion’s share of the responsibilities at home, assuming the role of stay-at-home dad and primary caregiver for their daughter. With unbridled enthusiasm David shared a few aspects of his typical day, which included the following:
I became a mall walker uh, you know; I'd go to the mall and it was funny because the neighborhood we live in has a lot of wealthy individuals so you go to the mall and you see all these uh these uh desperate housewives is what I refer to them as, out pushing the strollers and here I am 6'3" 240lbs pushing my stroller as well, so I mean we'd go to the mall pretty much every day and I pushed her and she likes movement and that would keep her calm and sometimes I could get her to go to sleep and at the same time I could get my exercise. Um I'd take her to lunch with me, put her in a highchair and you know, I was Mr. Mom. I walked around with diaper bags the whole nine yards and uh and so uh you know changing diapers wasn't a big deal, being thrown up on wasn't a big deal, being peed on, being crapped on, that just never fazed me.

Although many of David’s answers were laced with certain clues about his philosophy of work and family life balance, responding to the question of whether household duties and child caregiving was primarily the domain of the female partner, he addressed this issue with more specificity in this manner:

[A] lot of men do feel that way; a lot of women don't get as much help as I give, but you know, to me it's an experience. It's something I want to experience and I think and I believe that interaction - that time doing those things has made my bond and my relationship with my wife better and it's also made my bond and my relationship with my child better. That's that's something that I wanted to experience; that's something that I want to be a part of. And also you know when I leave when I leave and when I go down to New Orleans for a week to go try a case, I'm not worried about my daughter with my wife. When my wife wants to
go have a girls’ weekend in San Francisco and go to, you know, the vineyards and all that other stuff, and she leaves my daughter with me, she’s not worried about that. I mean I’ve had friends of mine who are fathers and can’t believe I change, you know, crappy diapers. I don’t think twice about that; that doesn’t bother me that it… so um - you know I’ve enjoyed my role and I wouldn’t change it for anything.

David admitted that at times his role as Mr. Mom was very stressful, but he continued to remind himself that those precious moments were times he could never get back, and would certainly cherish later in life. “I knew I was bonding with her, formulating a great relationship with her and such, but um, I enjoyed it and would do it again in a heartbeat; absolutely, I would do it again in a heartbeat.” David displayed a remarkable sense of focus on the big picture as relates to his family and vision for the future. When queried about areas of control in his life, he emphatically stated,

I have a bit of control in my family life; I mean, my wife and I get along real great; we have the same types of values with regards to marriage, with regard to raising our child, and that’s huge!

David clearly harbored no psychological resentment about his role personally or in the context of family and community, and stated explicitly and implicitly in his responses that he did not get caught up with issues involving gendered expectations.

Steve

“I think it’s a challenge to the ego. It’s definitely breaking societal norms and it’s frowned upon. I think societally, it’s hard not to feel that.”
Unlike the accompanying partners previously discussed, and who experienced the role of stay-at-home dad, Steve and Laura, his wife of 20 years, have no children. Steve is a 40-year old Caucasian who accompanied his wife from Montana to Nevada over 10 years ago when Laura interviewed for and received a teaching position with the Clark County School District (CCSD). Steve initially thought his transition to Las Vegas would have been relatively smooth because he had planned to matriculate to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) in the Health Promotions curriculum, a program akin to the one he had begun at Montana State. However, when he attempted to enroll, he learned that the program in which he had planned to enroll was different from what had been represented by telephone. Although he had never really thought about education as a career choice, Steve’s career path was altered when he decided to attend graduate school and thus, was able to focus more on his personal goals because of his wife’s earnings. He is currently studying for a master’s degree in education while substitute teaching.

Steve said he had never heard the term accompanying partner or trailing partner and was taken up with the terminology. “I guess in my current situation with my wife working and I am not, it’s interesting to hear that,” he declared with mild amusement. In response to the question of discussions that occurred leading up to the decision to come to Las Vegas, Steve said that although they were “gung ho about leaving Montana,” he would like to have stayed to complete his graduate degree primarily because of his connections with the professors there. In the long run Steve and Laura felt the benefits far outweighed the negatives, especially when they compared the pay scale for teachers during the boom years of Las Vegas. In his words, “Um, but yeah, it was tough as far as my own personal situation is concerned because I would’ve preferred to have been able
to stay, but like I said, the sacrifice was pretty easy to make.” To the question of adaptation and whether the adjustment was easy once they arrived in Las Vegas or a culture shock, Steve responded in this fashion:

Well, that’s another good question. Both of us had become accustomed to rural living, sometimes in an area where there’s no restaurant, no movie theater, then we come to Vegas. So there definitely was a bit of a culture shock at first, um getting accustomed to a faster paced environment. But I’d say actually probably the biggest culture shock for us was the friendliness of the environment in Montana relative to the environment of Las Vegas. That, coupled with my career change was kind of tough.

When pressed on whether a time existed when he regretted having relocated, he stated unequivocally, “Yeah, I’d say probably in the beginning there was some debate about whether we had made the right decision or not.” He felt that the initial transition was somewhat disconcerting particularly as relates to his personal career goals, but ultimately, since he was able to begin graduate school in education and teach, everything worked out well. Steve pointed out that after being in Las Vegas for 10 years, he and Laura have since adapted to the environment, have established a new coterie of friends, and their career goals are on very promising paths.

Steve began to express his sentiments about his personal role as an accompanying partner by saying:

I’m pretty comfortable in my role for the most part, uh to say it’s not a challenge to the ego, that’s probably a lie; it is a bit difficult I think. The only time I feel
comfortable with it is between my wife and I, but when discussing your life situation with other people you get a little self-conscious about it. Uh, so I feel decent about it, but I also feel a lot of pressure to change the situation to uh, get back into the workforce and to be making money, which the interesting part about that is I probably or I really don’t need to. Theoretically, we could just live off one income for the rest of our lives; however, I don’t think I could handle that.

In support of his desire to be gainfully employed as opposed to simply remaining at home, and in partial response to the perception of his role in the context of the community, Steve cited evidence from a friend with whom he had spoken and who is similarly situated. “Although he has a child, he said he did it (functioned as a stay-at-home dad) for about five years, until he finally couldn’t take it anymore; he had to go back into the workforce just because of outside pressures.” Steve concluded that he would probably also eventually succumb to those pressure, but presently, as relates to him and Laura, “We’re actually pretty okay with the situation,” he affirmed.

As a follow-up to the above question, Steve’s sentiments were sought on the matter of gendered expectations and whether it mattered who makes the most money or who is the primary breadwinner. He said that his wife had typically earned more money than he since being married, with a couple of exceptions. He stated,

Again, between us, it really doesn’t matter, and most of the guys I know are pretty non-traditional as well, and most of them don’t view it as a bad thing if the wife makes more money than the husband. But I think there is some pressure to be the primary breadwinner and not to be reliant upon another person.
When asked about how he viewed his role in the context of extended family and friends and how he perceived their reaction to his role as a house husband, Steve released a sigh of laughter and shared the following:

Well – from my family’s perspective, uh they were very grateful that uh, my wife has been there to assist me, you know, so they’re pretty okay with it. Now that being said, I’ve always – anytime it’s happened where I’ve either accompanied Laura, because she makes more money while I haven’t, I’ve always been working towards something as well. So if I were not, their opinion might be different, say, if I were just sitting on the couch taking up space, I don’t know how supportive they would be.

But as for her family, I definitely do feel like I have to justify myself more in those situations. We make jokes about uh…every Christmas we go back to Massachusetts and I sort of have to give my presentation. I have to kind of win over and explain myself to them and give my spiel as to why I deserve to be married to their uh sibling, so yeah, there is – you get more pressure I think from that side.

Expressing his sentiments about how his role was viewed in relation to the community or neighborhood in which he resides, Steve quickly noted that he and his wife did not really have much community involvement and did not really know their neighbors and, therefore, considered the community’s reaction a non-issue.

We don’t really know our neighbors that well anyway, beyond just a couple of houses. Uh, but that being said, I think we’ve managed to kind of adapt, develop
some friendships that we're comfortable with in the city here. Um, not a lot of community involvement though - kind of our own little world, but we're pretty happy.

Jake

“I would be happy to be the primary breadwinner and switching salaries, but she has the skills, the talents needed and functions better in large settings.”

Jake is a 53 year old Mexican-American who has been married to his wife, Patricia, for 26 years. He is an agency recruitment analyst with a large international firm in which Patricia is an executive, and they have one daughter who is 16 years old. They left Colorado when Patricia was promoted and are currently dual earners in the same company. Jake indicated that he and Patricia had an established understanding early on, that whoeverer career would take off, or if the opportunity presented itself to one of them, the partner would follow. He candidly admitted that his wife had more reluctance to relocate than he, but that it always boiled down to making the decision jointly with each promotion or relocation. In all of their moves, the first one was the most difficult because of Patricia’s reservations about leaving her family and roots. Otherwise, he said the relocations and transitions have been relatively smooth.

Expounding on his role as an accompanying partner and the matter of relocation, Jake took the dialogue to a different, albeit very significant level, observing that companies were seemingly beginning to do a better job in terms of assisting with relocation. Speaking of the company in which he works “Oh they’re awesome,” Jake reported, explaining how he didn’t know if he could have moved without their (the
company’s) assistance. “They do everything from selling your house to packing and moving you. I mean, so that makes things a lot easier.”

Since his wife was the one with great interpersonal skills, Jake felt she would be the one with a high profile position and was in her comfort zone when interacting with people. In reflecting on their earlier decision to relocate, Jake recalled and shared the following as part of their discourse in arriving at a decision to relocate:

I said, you know, let's go. I mean, we'd been trying; I'd been trying and we couldn't make a match and they (the company) want you. And uh, you know, she being a female Hispanic maybe that perhaps that was what they were looking for, and you know some of what they were looking for in these considerations for placement and I know you got a lot of talent, got a lot of skill, a lot of potential, you know, let's go. I said you know I'm flexible; I can do anything - I felt like I could do anything so I was good to go.

Generally, Jake’s attitude about his wife being primary breadwinner was one of indifference. “I am fine with her taking the lead; I know a lot of people and have established great friendships, but that’s not a driver for me to be the primary person in establishing relationships or to be primary breadwinner,” Jake modestly stated.

When queried about the attitude of family relative to Patricia being the primary breadwinner, Jake characterized their families as very close. They had grown up in neighboring communities and their family members were friends with each other prior his marriage to Patricia. Therefore, the fact that Patricia was primary breadwinner was inconsequential.
On the other hand, when asked about the community in which they presently reside, the general reactions to his accompanying partner role and that of secondary breadwinner, Jake laughed and responded:

I’ve got a bowling buddy and his wife and come to think of it, another guy too, who are in the same situation and they wish they had that situation where their wives made more than they did, you know, and they’re always teasing.

He added that if he had his druthers, however, he wishes the roles could be reversed, but overall, “it hasn’t been that bad.” Jake said that oftentimes in the community at large, people assume that he is the primary breadwinner and presume that their relocation was due to his position with the company. He felt like such assumptions were clearly based on a kind of gender bias. Having moved about seven or eight times, community reaction may have been different in various communities. “Those cities in which racial prejudice was more prevalent tended to share equally a certain degree of gender bias as well,” he pointed out, citing such places as Orlando and Lakeland, Florida.

Jake stated that although he and Patricia had shared the caregiving responsibilities of their daughter, he had taken on the greater portion because he travelled less than Patricia. Fortunately, things worked out because he had learned how to be “a pretty decent cook” and “meticulous about cleaning things,” he boasted. Jake was probed on whether the primary responsibility of childcare and household duties should rest with the female partner, and in reply he stated:

I would say that historically in generations past, that’s the way it was in a lot of households and it still is in many, but not in ours. It’s been shared. We’ve had,
for like housecleaning, we’ve had someone since early on in our marriage, but even before that, I would take care of the yard and we kinda shared the household responsibilities – and though she would offer to help with yard stuff, it’s kind of a safety issue for me and I would tell her I’ll take care of that.

In considering any adverse impact on personal goals and aspirations, Jake felt like the various moves had serve to broaden his vision and allowed him to experience those personal goals he had harbored. “It’s worked out well…it’s worked out well.”

Jonathan

“I watched them grow up, which was the coolest part of the whole thing.”

Jonathan is a 41-year old Caucasian and has been married and/or cohabiting with his wife, Elaine, for 11 years. The couple jointly decided to move from Connecticut to Las Vegas where Elaine is currently employed with the Clark County School District as a teacher. Jonathan had visited his aunt numerous times in Las Vegas prior to their move and therefore, had no need to research the city and no reservations about accompanying his wife to this geographical area. For a while they were dual earners, but Jonathan was later laid off during the economic downturn of 2009. Not long thereafter, he and Elaine made the joint decision that he would suspend the job hunt and take a year off to become a stay-at-home dad when she became pregnant with their first child. They now have two sons, four and two years old, to whom Jonathan has been a stay-at-home dad. Jonathan’s background is Information Technology and Computer Electronics, a field in which he had hoped to gain employment in Las Vegas. Reflecting on his career path, Jonathan commented:
I kind of put my career on hold to do that and… I had to take a step back because of it. Uh, I guess you have to when you're out of work for almost four years, so my field is different… I do have work experience, which sometimes trumps people out of school and things like that, but it'll take some time, but I'll be okay, you know.

Although Jonathan’s words, as written, may seemingly portray an air of remorse or disappointment, his tonal quality relayed no such message, as it was an unapologetic, matter-of-fact statement laced with optimism and resilience about having relocated.

In describing his sentiments about his role as a stay-at-home dad, Jonathan admitted in frank terms that it was tough. “You know, it’s great; I love every minute of it, but it’s hard and it’s an adjustment. I mean, it’s tough, I think, for someone that’s not a stay-at-home dad.” He said he was grateful that his mom had since moved to Las Vegas because she has been an enormous support. For example, he said he looked forward to Wednesdays when she would take his oldest one and keep him overnight to give him a break. However, Jonathan spoke with great excitement, exuded enormous pleasure, and sounded the most gratified when he said, “I watched them grow up, you know, and I wouldn’t have it any other way; but just looking back at it, thinking about it, it was tough, but I wouldn’t change a thing.”

Responding to the question of angst about not being the primary breadwinner, Jonathan had this to say:

I didn’t have any thoughts about that; I mean if it was the other way around, I’m sure it would’ve been okay with my wife. It just happened that way – uh I was
used to being the breadwinner, but it was more financially feasible for me to stay home.

Jonathan said that while off for three months during the summer, at one point Elaine had remarked “I don’t know how you did this for three and a half years.” He then made a reference to how kids constantly get into things between the ages of two and four. He quickly added: “We love our kids, but sometimes being home with them, especially at that age – it’s crazy; they’re constantly running around, doing things, but after all, they’re kids, you know.” Nevertheless, Jonathan spoke with considerable ease about his role, and was obviously comfortable with the choices he had made.

On the question of community reaction and his interaction, Jonathan said that some people said they couldn’t do it (perform the role of stay-at-home dad), “but most regarded it as admirable that I was doing it.” One specific remark by Jonathan seemed to have summed up his sentiments about the attitude of family and friends. He stated unequivocally, “If friends or family can't understand what you're doing, then they’re not your friends. Now people like my friends that had children were, like – ‘How ya doing?’ And they were showing more supportive interest.”

Sharing his attitude about the issue of gender and gendered expectations in the context of his role as caregiver to their two sons, Jonathan said,

If my wife did it, God bless her; I did it, God bless me! I mean you know, it - it was just something that happened; it wasn't something that was planned and, you know, again, I wouldn't change a thing. I got to hang out with my kids.”

On a related gender issue, Jonathan shared his philosophy about whether child caregiving responsibility rested primarily with the female. He had no trepidations about stating,
Maybe 50 years ago, that was the case, but no, I don’t think so. I believe that if a parent is able to stay home with the kids for that very important part of their life, I’m okay with whoever that is. I mean, I got to see my kids grow up right in front of me and that’s pretty cool.

Summing up his attitude about his nontraditional role, Jonathan proudly flashed a broad grin and enthusiastically declared: “Now they’re old enough to be in school and it worked out in the long run. Like I said, I wouldn’t change a thing; and hopefully, what I’ve shared can help another stay-at-home dad!”

Jonathan and Elaine’s boys are now in kindergarten and pre-school; they’re adjusting to the structure of school and excelling. Jonathan is currently working as a database administrator and Elaine continues to advance in the Clark County School District system while they are enjoying the luxury of two salaries in the household.

Martin

“Our careers were not as important as raising our kids correctly.”

Martin is a 66 year-old Caucasian man who resides in the suburbs of Chicago. He and Maria were married for 29 years and have two children. Martin has a master’s degree in Criminal/Social Justice and has worked for several years alternately as a corrections officer, as an adjunct professor, and as a consultant to law enforcement. Maria’s first career path involved working in higher education after receiving her doctorate then subsequently becoming a lawyer. Although this would be Martin’s first experience as an accompanying partner, he recalls that it was a logical move when Maria had been offered a career opportunity in another location, particularly because he had just been laid off. Reflecting on his new role as an accompanying partner, Martin anxiously talked about
that period of his life. “It didn’t bother me at all. I was happy; we were ecstatic!” Shortly after Maria accepted a job at the University of Iowa, their first child was born and Martin then became a stay-at-home dad. This would continue for approximately four and a half years during which time a daughter was born, adding to Martin’s caregiving responsibilities. Subsequently, Maria was offered a better opportunity in North Carolina, which they discussed and jointly decided to relocate and they remained there for another four years.

Martin anxiously expressed how readily he adapted to his new environment, pointing out that he had no problem adapting, and noting that after their first move, the second one just seemed natural. I didn’t have a sense of independence, I stayed in the mode of interdependence in the sense that we depended on each other and our kids depended on us.

In describing his typical day as a stay-at-home dad, Martin emphasized that he did not operate the household on a rigid schedule and that the structure was rather flexible.

I didn’t schedule things. I enjoyed interacting with my kids. I was from a large family, uh the oldest of 10 children, so I knew how to change diapers and take care of my kids. We would sit there and watch Sesame Street together and I did a lot of interacting with them; they were my priority.

On the other hand, Martin said that sometimes he would get some blowback from his wife because she basically suggested she wanted him to do the job of running the household and managing certain caregiving duties the way she would. It was at that point that Martin responded by telling her that if she had a better way, or if she wanted to take care of the housekeeping and caregiving activities, perhaps she should quit her job, do the
child caregiving and let him go out and work. He said he thought he was doing a good job as a father and caregiver and that sometimes complicated his role. As he recalled the situation:

It was not so much a situation that was a deal breaker as far as our marriage was concerned as much as a basic difference of opinions on child raising strategies. I mean, my parents argued on occasion, not often, when I was a kid, but had minor disagreements, which I think probably played into my approach to being a husband and father and general caregiving responsibilities.

Sharing his attitude about who made the most money, Martin declared with great passion:

It didn’t bother me that my wife was the primary breadwinner. I was great with it. Of course, sometimes she would bring it up about my lack of employment or lack of steady income production, which might have episodically bothered me, but uh, my overriding concern was about the safety of our kids. My mom always stayed home and my dad worked part time jobs in addition to the Chicago public school system. A lavish lifestyle was not my priority. I didn’t care one way or the other about how much money was made or which of us made it because we had already agreed that we didn’t want to have kids in daycare and raised by others.

With respect to other family members’ reaction to his role, Martin said they were away from their families, for the most part, so their families’ reaction was not really an issue.
As for community reactions, in the college towns where they were, many families were similarly situated and it was a non-issue. However, Martin shared one incident, which could easily have been in response to the issue of community reaction, but relates more to the issue of gender role and gendered expectations. He recounted an interaction that occurred one day when he had taken his son to the park. Several of the women’s husbands worked at the University of Iowa, a major employer there. While in the park, about nine of the stay-at-home moms were there with their children, according to Martin.

There I was with my son and one of the women there said ‘Oh you must be a Mr. Mom,’ to which I replied, ‘That’s a rather insulting statement. I’m a Mr. Dad, and not a Mr. Mom. You think about that for a while.’ The woman looked me dead in the eye and the she candidly admitted, ‘You know, you’re right; that was a rather sexist thing to say.’ I further elaborated as my son continued to play and told her ‘Look, I am doing the same thing you’re doing, but I am doing it from my perspective as a male parent.”

**Slim**

“We thought it would be in our best interest for me to accompany her.”

Slim is a 58 year old corrections officer, a former school teacher, and retired navy officer who is married to Clarisse, a career military officer working as a program analyst. The couple had been stationed at various locations abroad prior to their return to the United States. After Slim had completed his tour of duty, he was thrust into the position of assuming the role of an accompanying partner. Although their three children are currently adults and have moved from the household, Slim continues to function in the role of an accompanying partner, the most recent relocation from Las Vegas to San
Diogo. In connection with his initial experience as an accompanying partner relocating to Las Vegas from Texas, Slim shared their decision making process as follows:

The opportunities for her were still endless; as a result we thought it would be in our best interest for me to accompany her since I had already completed my tour in the armed services. So it - as far as uh economic support, as far as uh, having the opportunity to do some things differently, you know, it was something that the both of us discussed in depth in terms of determining if that was indeed the right decision and, you know, it was. Actually it was a win-win situation because as I indicated, uh her compensation far outweighed mine at that point in time, so it was determined that I would now become the supporting partner of the marriage.

In connection with their most recent relocation, Slim stated that both he and his wife had always wanted to be stationed in San Diego; therefore, when a position was opened and the opportunity came to move there, it was practically a no-brainer and not much discussion was required. As a school teacher at that time, Slim felt confident that he would be able to secure employment in California, which did not occur. He then applied for and began training to become a corrections officer, a position he presently holds. He said that he has never been a stay-at-home kind of guy and always had to be doing something. Therefore, although his wife had been the primary earner, he felt the need to become a dual earner.

I never really looked at it as being uh say, maybe subservient, not that I’m a chauvinist or anything of that type, but you know, uh because of the fact that I did have an income or my own salary - you know, that kind of thing for the
most part gave me the latitude to do the things that I felt was important to me uh and keeping the marriage strong so to speak.

Furthermore, Slim spoke confidently about his role as an accompanying partner emphasizing that despite the fact that Clarisse may have been alternately the sole or primary breadwinner, it never became an issue in their marriage. He further elaborated:

Because of the role that I play in this relationship, I feel that my part is as much when you look at uh the favored roles - I play as strong of a role as she played. And I don't think it has to be salary based because typically when you look at marital relationship, primarily the uh husband’s role is to provide security. And when I say security I’m talking about security in terms of protection and comfort and uh there has never been a doubt in her mind nor mine in terms of providing that uh, first and foremost priority particularly in our relationship.

When asked about his perception of how extended family members or community members reacted to his nontraditional role as an accompanying partner, Slim laughed heartily and said:

Well you know you have those jokesters out there - everybody wants to throw some shade at you every now and again, but once again, I’m a retired military man, so you know I’m - I’m a hardcore vet, just like a duck you know, that kind of talk basically just rolls off your back, but in all seriousness, for people that actually fit within our inner circle, that really never became an issue uh you know she never really uh looked at it as something that she felt was something that requires some additional attention.
Unquestionably, Slim portrayed a remarkable air of security and surefootedness in discussing his role and his world view about such a role.

The perspectives of some of the male accompanying partners have been provided in this chapter, which are intended to be illustrative of the experiences of the majority of the participants; however, a few of the remaining narratives are included in the Appendix by way of further exemplifying the results found in the interview data.

The results of this study revealed a number of fascinating themes or nodes (units of analysis) that merit examination in greater detail. Unquestionably, the unabashed transparency with which the participants enthusiastically shared their narratives was extremely refreshing. In conducting these open-ended, but semi-structured in-depth interviews, the male accompanying partners who shared the above narratives were able to recall and share their experiences more readily and with ease. This experience allowed the men to share their respective lived experiences, values, and world views with openness and authenticity, while allowing for individual reflection and interpretation. As a result of this openness, while several strands emerged, certain recurring themes became manifest.

**Predominant Themes**

After poring over the transcripts of the various narratives chronicling the participants’ experiences, certain common threads were manifest throughout the narratives. Thus, an analysis of the interview data using the clustering device revealed a number of common threads and kinship of experiences among the men, all of which can be condensed or reduced to the following four recurrent and predominant themes: *family (partnership/children), sacrifice (personal career), support (partner’s career), and*
security (financial and emotional), as represented in figure 2 below, all of which will be discussed in greater detail.

Figure 2. Units of Analysis

**Theme one - Family Interest First.** The most common of the four themes found in the narratives of the accompanying partners was a strong sense of family, consistently ascribed as the top priority of the participants, whether in response to a direct query or incorporated into the varied responses to related questions. For example, consider the following responses:

**Burt**

I've always just felt as long as I can - uh my first priority is kids, then wife, then the household, so if I keep - that's sometimes that's enough, that's enough. I keep that going and I've still always been about family first, us, first, and then once
everything's taken care of then maybe a little bit to the community, but I've never been really good about it.

**David**

In terms of raising my family giving my daughter great opportunity and exposure, opening her world and you know, my wife having great opportunities and for that matter myself having great opportunities, you know - this was the right move.

**Jake**

In discussing areas of his life in which he felt he had control or did not have control, Jake stated: You know in order to preserve the family unit, you know, her job is here in corporate here and um, so that’s kind of out of my control I would say.

   Additionally, Jake responded to a question about being a dual earner and managing priorities by declaring: “It (referring to his workload at the office) kind of provides some needed flexibility and helping with some of that work life balance and - you know, with a family with a daughter.”

**Rex**

In elaborating on his explanation about having been indoctrinated to think in the traditional mindset as head of the household and leading the family, Rex’s rationale was put in this manner: “You have to understand and keep reminding yourself of the ultimate goal was the survival of the family, and uh - that's the thing that drove me and allowed me to do what I did.”

**Harold**
One very insightful response came from Harold who stated, “We are co-owners or partners in the business of our family,” referring to his family in the literal sense as he clarified that he and his wife are not owners of any commercial enterprises.

**Slim**

Of the various responses relating to and exemplifying that strong sense of family, probably the most hilarious came from one of the more mature participants who responded to the question of whether he was aware of any disparaging remarks made by family, extended family or community members about his non-traditional role. He answered, “I could care less about any comments from other folks. You see, I operate on the rule of my fifty, F-I-F-T-Y,” carefully spelling the number as if teaching an elementary school student. Upon being asked to clarify, he laughed heartily and explained, “family interest first- then y’all.” That overall sentiment about family seemed to have appropriately captured the pervasive philosophy expressed or implied in the majority of the discourses, with or without the added humor.

**Theme two - Mutual Support in Partnership.** Another significant strand from the male accompanying partners in the study was an ongoing reference to support of wife. This common theme was expressed in terms such as “doing what was best for me and my wife” or if children were involved, “doing what was best for my wife and kids.” Consider the following responses, which are merely illustrative rather than exhaustive:

**David**

I got back last night, but truthfully I should’ve probably stayed until Monday, but everything is compressed; everything involved trying to get back here you know,
help relieve some of the pressure on my wife with regards to, you know, having my daughter and then working her full time job you know trying to keep the partnership together so to speak…My wife is really happy at her job and I want her to continue to grow and develop at that company and for her career to continue to grow and develop because I mean she’s happy and that’s great.

Rex

When I agreed to support my wife I really was looking to get out of the environment that I was in and landing in another environment where I could take the mantle and role of the leading spouse in our relationship and what I mean by leading is financially. Um I was geared and raised to to uh take on that role and the career path were gonna be my path. Uh I was confident enough to uh support her, but I definitely did that with hopes that I would assume the leading role again financially in the house. Yeah, I fully expected to have the role of the primary caregiver - no, not as a primary caregiver - as the primary breadwinner. Yeah and uh, I wasn't geared psychologically or anything else to assume the role that I did but I’m a team player, so uh, I understood what I had to do and uh I buckled down and I took care of that.

Theme three - Financial and Emotional Security. The third theme that emerged from the interviews was the frequent reference to security, particularly financial security for the family. This category seemed to have driven a number of decisions, sentiments, and goals of the majority of the participants. When considering the terminology “security,” more often than not it is associated with financial well-being. However, its connotation can have a plethora of interpretations as contrasted in the responses below:
David

I owe a lot to my wife and I owe a lot my daughter and - you know, I'm not a person who's greedy or or materialistic, but my life outside of my family is driven totally by finance. You know, we have law school obligations and home obligations and I want to, you know, leave my daughter in the best position that I possibly can when my time comes and be able to afford the best opportunities and experiences for her as she grows up. So, um you know, my overall goal not only as a man, but as a father and as a business person, is to, you know, when she turns to me and says ‘Look dad, you know, granddad went to Tulane law school, Mama went to Tulane law school, you went to Tulane law school, I want to go to Tulane law school too.’ No matter how expensive it is when that point comes, I want to be able to write a check and for her to go.

On the other hand, consider the following take on the terminology by Slim as was cited earlier.

Slim

I play as strong of a role as she plays (in the relationship). And I don't think it has to be salary based because typically when you look at marital relationship, primarily the uh husband’s role is to provide security. And when I say security, I'm talking about security in terms of protection and comfort and uh there has never been a doubt in her mind nor mine in terms of providing that uh first and foremost priority particular in our relationship.
Although the term security is bandied about in numerous ways, but often in the context of finances, it was curious to see how it can take on different meaning predicated on the individual participant’s frame of reference.

**Theme four - Sacrifice with No Regrets.** The fourth recurring theme, sometimes explicit and oftentimes implicit in the narratives, was the element of sacrifice. The participants often referred to the notion of deferring and subsuming their personal dreams and aspirations in the goals of their partners, and seemingly embraced their circumstances “for the good of the order.” Eight of the participants, a majority, seemed to shy away from adopting a martyr’s mentality when speaking about their nontraditional role and the sacrifices associated with it. Instead, while acknowledging the sacrifice involved, they refused to dwell on it or descend to a quasi “woe is me” attitude. Instead, the majority of the men seemingly wanted to emphasize how they were in control of their circumstances.

**Burt**

“For her career - if she wants to keep going up to get to the place where she wants to be, wherever they (the company) want us to go, we'll go.” He continued to stress:

[I was] always a hard worker, enjoyed making money; money's a big driver for me, so at first when we had just one child, I understood what I needed to do - it was hard to give up getting a paycheck, to be honest with you. Always, always felt my worth was that every Friday getting a paycheck. That's how I always felt my worth was, but then being a stay-at-home dad you don't have that.

**Rex**
When she was promoted and the opportunity to relocate presented itself, I was one of the ones behind her saying, uh let's do this; let's get out of New Orleans…“She knows my sacrifice 'cause I definitely believe this is a sacrifice. There's no emasculating issue here; uh she understands my sacrifice; she understands the kind of guy I am so she respects me in that way across the board.

**Martin**

We were ecstatic that my wife got this job in Iowa. I mean was happy so being an accompanying partner didn’t bother me at all. We pretty much decided that I would put my career on the backburner for a few years and I stayed at home with my kids.

Compare those supportive comments to David’s who said, “I have a bit of control in my family life; I mean, my wife and I get along real great; we have the same types of values with regards to marriage, with regard to raising our child, and that’s huge!”

**Steve**

It was tough as far as my own personal situation is concerned. I would’ve preferred to have been able to stay in our previous location, but like I said the sacrifice was pretty easy to make.

**David**

There was a period of time in there where my wife was working full time and I was unemployed; and because she was working such long hours, I was taking on quite a bit more responsibility at home.

**Jonathan**
“I kind of put my career on hold to do that and… I had to take a step back because of it.”

Experiential Correlation

Undoubtedly, a significant correlation existed between and among the participants, their respective lived experiences, and their world view. The similarities in the participants’ attitude and philosophy, irrespective of race and age, were remarkable.

Most importantly, the overarching strand that clearly permeated each of the four themes was an unmistakably strong sense of egalitarianism. Succinctly put, egalitarianism is an attitude that typically refers to the equal division of domestic duties with earned income, although for purposes of this research the term will take on an even broader and more comprehensive meaning. Gerson (2010) eloquently described the post-modern egalitarian partnership in this manner: “Men and women view equality in different ways. Women are eager to find a partner to share caretaking, while men look forward to sharing the financial load.” By the same token, the author goes on to say, “Yet the desire to transcend gender boundaries provides a common element to these aspirations,” an attitude that largely debunks the traditional mindset. The concept of the egalitarianism mindset ascribed to the men in this study is better understood when explained in the context of the traditional and neo-traditional approach to work-family life.

Traditional Philosophy of Family

Recall that chapter two included a discussion of the traditional approach to work-family life characterizing the male as the patriarch or head of the household and a working husband/father; whereas the female was the stay-at-home individual functioning
in the capacity of housewife and mother/caregiver to the children. Furthermore, the female bore the lion’s share of the household duties, whereas for the male, household chores were practically considered taboo. In that traditional genre, the male was the sole breadwinner in the family, which has alternately been referred to as the nuclear family. Although such a paradigm still exists to some extent in some families, for the most part, it has become extinct or is rapidly declining. Nevertheless, in this postmodern era, vestiges of the traditional philosophy remain prevalent in many sectors of society. Obviously, by the very nature and purpose of the current study, none of the 12 men interviewed subscribed to or corresponded with the traditional philosophy of family.

**Neo-traditional Philosophy of Family**

The advent of numerous societal changes has also ushered in a change in the family structure. Therefore, shifting attitudes, behavioral trends, and different values have brought about the emergence of a more contemporary perception of the postmodern family (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). The neo-traditional notion of family is a hybrid of the traditional in the sense that some aspects of the traditional approach are still quite prevalent particularly in households with dual earners. In the neo-traditional domain, both male and female partners are contributing financially to the well-being of the family, with the female in some instances in the role of the primary earner. Sometimes men who subscribe to this arena or type of thinking regard household duties as elective or optional (Tereskinas, 2010).

It should be noted that as both male and female adhere to their belief systems, a distinction should be made between the traditional and the egalitarian approach. Which philosophy individuals cling to becomes largely dependent upon how they were taught,
nurtured, and how parents or guardians helped to shape their frame of reference (Epstein, 1988; Gerson, 2010; Ickes, 1981, Sidanius, 1991). Socialization in a philosophy that encourages males to prove their masculinity can impose a role strain when they fail to live up to those expectations (Barnett, Marshall & Pleck, 1992). Hence, depending on the social orientation brought to the partnership, it will tend to thrive or perish, depending on the strength of the bond between the partners (Ickes, 1985).

Despite the fact that significantly more women have entered the workforce, some of the remnants of traditional gender role ideology and gendered expectations relative to work-family life persist. For example, while recognizing the significant contribution of the female, the male may subscribe to the philosophy that household duties are exclusively or primarily within the female realm. Even though the female may be a dual earner or perhaps, the primary breadwinner, she is sometimes relegated to pulling a proverbial “second shift” with the added burden of household obligations as documented and articulated by Hochschild (1989). In the instant study, only three of the participants, Rex, Martin, and Khari seemed to have been influenced by the neo-traditional philosophy of family, which involves the female bearing a disproportionate amount of domestic duties while the male offers token assistance. Two of the men referenced the influence of their fathers and what they had observed during their earlier nurturing and socialization as contributing to the shaping of their frame of reference.

For example, Rex believed his mindset was evolving or had evolved as he related the following:

Well my thoughts have truly evolved. Uh yeah, when I was coming up, anything around the house from dinner to washing, sweeping, ironing, just the house was
uh my mother’s responsibility. And she might have had a job herself, but it was her responsibility and even though as a kid my mother kind of was the kind of mother who would say, ‘You need to learn how to iron so you won't have to be reliant on somebody; you need to learn how to do your own hem, so you wouldn't - and she taught me a number of things, even how to cook so that, ‘cause she didn't want me having to take uh a wife or so because I didn't know how to do those things, or because that person was only good at doing those things. She prepared me to be independent as long as I need to be ‘til I find that right girl, or girl she liked (Chuckled).

Now, my dad, when he was there, he was the kind of guy who worked all day; he came home and it was time to relax. He didn't do much most of that stuff around the house and then he went to work again, so that's the way I was, you know, orientated into that. That's the way of men, and New Orleans has a tradition of this thing of the wife being the homemaker a little stronger than a lot of other places - that southern belle type thing or that southern mindset is strong down south um, and that's why it was even more unheard of for me to do what I did (referring to his role as accompanying partner).

Citing the role and attitude of his father, Rex admitted that he may have been influenced subconsciously by his father’s lifestyle with respect to household duties, but is gradually abandoning that philosophy. Now that he has resumed full time employment, Rex admits that he has significantly more empathy for the enormous responsibilities of his wife at work, some of which often spills over to the home front.
Figure 3. Egalitarian World View

The egalitarian approach to the partnership and the family refers to scenarios in which the male and female, as partners, seek to complement each other and seek to either equalize or share in the division of domestic labor and/or caregiving, thereby contributing to the household in a way that is mutually rewarding and enhancing to their relationship (Tereskinas, 2010). In other words, each partner provides and seeks the support of the other in decision making relative to family matters, considers each other’s opinions, while voluntarily lending mutual support. The study found that of the 12 participants, the majority (9) espoused an egalitarian philosophy of partnership and family. The contrast between the neo-traditional approach to work and family verbalized by two of the participants, as compared to the egalitarian philosophy embraced by at least nine of the participants, was evidence of a remarkable paradigm shift demonstrably prevalent as deduced from the narratives of these accompanying partners. Furthermore, it signaled a
clear departure from the traditional, hegemonic attitudes some men often embrace, which sometimes become a significant part of their modus operandi.

Consider the narrative of Khari, a full time student who is training to be a chemical dependency counselor and expects to receive a master’s degree in that area. He is 28 years old and married to a professional nanny and the two them live in Seattle. In an ironic twist, however, when responding to the issue of the female partner being the primary breadwinner, Khari, ostensibly the youngest of the participants, espoused an egalitarian philosophy, but characterized it in the following manner:

I am a Biblical Christian; I view women and men as sharing inherent equal quality, dignity and worth, but serving different roles…There are always exceptions, but men are called to provide for their family. I don’t want to put this as a precedent for all families, but my and my wife’s ideals are such that she wants to be a stay at home mom and raise children and I want to be a working dad that pays the bills and brings home a paycheck.

Later, when questioned about gender role and gender ideology, Khari responded quite eloquently in a combined philosophical and theological manner crafting his response as follows:

I don’t like to lay out incontrovertible gender roles. I think life is messy…In general, I would say there is I would call a creation ordinance, that women give birth; women breast feed. And these sorts of things infringe upon women’s ability to work in the way that it does in a man. Specifically, with my wife and my family, we are united in our ideals. She wants to stay home with the kids and I
want to work. And I think the nuclear family like that is set up in such a way that it’s the most beneficial to raising children, to having a healthy family environment and that kind of comes natural. On the other hand I don’t want to be so dogmatic as to suggest that anyone who deviates from that proposed ideal is somehow dysfunctional.

It appears at least nine of the participants had an overall egalitarian philosophy about their role in relation to their partners, but even the remaining three men harbored a general notion of equality at least in one or two areas of their partnership.

All of the men, perhaps with the exception of Burt, seemed to strike an optimistic note about their outlook on life for the future, as validated in their statements in response to how or to what extent their personal and professional goals had been impacted by being an accompanying partner. Even Burt’s response can be characterized as generally positive and supportive of his partner though he had concerns about his personal career. Overall, the participants’ responses sounded authentic, confident and devoid of any remorsefulness about the choices they had made. (See Appendix B)
First Research Questions Revisited

The first of the research questions in this study was a four-pronged inquiry, which explored how male accompanying partners perceived their role 1) as an individual; 2) as a partner in a marriage; 3) within the context of familial relations; and 4) as a member of the broader community. The findings revealed that in response to the first of the four-pronged query, only three of the participants, Burt Jonathan and Rex, seemingly expressed some remorse primarily related to the absence of the primary breadwinner status and/or having a lack of control over their personal financial security. For example, recall that Burt stated,

I don’t have a retirement 'cause I've lived off my wife the last you know five six years and um I don't earn an income, so I don't have any social security you know coming in, so I said there's gonna be a point I'm gonna need to do something.

Jonathan commented on his sacrifice stating, “I kind of put my career on hold to do that [be a stay-at-home dad] and… I had to take a step back because of it.” However, it should be emphasized that their responses related to the perception of their role, or personal feelings as individuals.

To the question of the perception of their roles seen through the lens of the partnership or marriage, the remorse factor dissipated. In fact, in the positive vein, numerous other parts of the interviews of Burt, Jonathan, and Rex sounded a genuine upbeat tone of the supportive spouse rather than any scintilla of remorse. Consistent with
the positive spousal support expressed in the narratives of the three men referenced above, was the finding that 100% of the participants expressed unequivocal support for the career of their spouse and an overall commitment to the partnership.

When asked how they felt or were made to feel as accompanying partners in the context of familial relations in the third aspect of the research question, Steve’s narrative was probably the most telling when he stated that whenever he visited his in-laws, he always felt like he was being put on the spot and had to justify his marriage to the siblings of his wife. In Steve’s words, he stated:

My wife’s the youngest in her family and whenever we go back east to her family, like at Christmas time, I feel like I have to kind of win over and explain myself to and give my spiel as to why I deserve to be married to their sibling. So, yeah, there is – you know, you get more pressure, I think, from that side.

Whether in response to part one or two of the first research question, notably absent from the entire conversation with the participants, was the word “cope” or any of its derivatives. Recall in Chapter Two a section was devoted to adaptation to a new environment and/or a new set of circumstances coupled with the coping strategies employed to deal with or minimize the otherwise stressful situation. More specifically, in discussing the congruence theory relative to coping with stress in transitioning between roles, a natural assumption might have included the notion that male accompanying partners would conceivably perceive their situation as challenging, threatening or demanding, thus inducing psychosocial or emotional stress (Hardie, 2005). In the aftermath of this study, such a notion can readily be dispelled or at least given less credence or validity.
Finally, the fourth part of the first research question was intended to elicit a response from the participants relative to their community. Worth reiterating is the response from one of the senior members who was answering a different question, but clearly relevant to the community question. “I could care less about any comments from other folks. You see, I operate on the rule of my fifty, F-I-F-T-Y,” jokingly referring to “family interest first- then y’all.” That comment seemingly epitomized the sentiments of the majority of the respondents to that question.

**Second Research Question Revisited**

With regards to the second research question, the majority of the participants (nine) seemingly sought to make it abundantly clear they harbored a sense of fairness and equality as relates to their spouse and overall partnership issues. One could cynically pose the question of whether the responses were predicated on deeply held convictions or mere political correctness. However, from the researcher’s observation the participants displayed significant poise, genuineness and self-confidence as they related their respective stories.

A certain conundrum raised its head during the course of the interviews relating to gender ideology and gendered expectations, which is worth sharing. Recall that David recounted his visit to the mall amongst numerous women who also were there enjoying an outing with their children. David referred to himself as being 6’4” tall and toting a diaper bag and pushing the stroller with his baby girl. David referred to himself as Mr. Mom, and at one point making the term an action verb, namely “I was Mr. Momming it.” In a similar vein, recall how Rex did a quick comparison of the times he would go to the store and see numerous women therein and he would be one of, perhaps two fathers. He
then related how more recently he has gone to stores and the trend now seems to be an increase in the presence Mr. Mom with their children, including Rex.

Now, juxtapose the above two stories recounted against the story Martin had related upon the occasion of his visit to the park with his toddler. Here is a reiteration of the story in Martin’s words:

There I was with my son and one of the women there said ‘Oh you must be a Mr. Mom,’ to which I replied, ‘That’s a rather insulting statement. I’m a Mr. Dad, and not a Mr. Mom. You think about that for a while.’ The woman looked me dead in the eye and the she candidly admitted, ‘You know you’re right; that was a rather sexist thing to say.’ I further elaborated as my son continued to play and told her Look, I am doing the same thing you’re doing, but I am doing it from my perspective as a male parent.

The above stories were selected in the context of gender ideology and gendered expectations for metacognitive reflection going forward. It is noteworthy that while the two participants, David and Rex readily referred to themselves as Mr. Mom in this post-modern egalitarian era, Martin took issue with the lady in the park who referred to him with that label and even told her the remark was sexist. The dichotomy between these two situations is striking. One could pose the question of whether men can refer to themselves in that manner, but others may not, particularly women. Undoubtedly, it conjures up a number of additional questions relating to gender that may be worthy of further exploration.
Summary of Findings

A number of salient findings were uncovered during the course of this research project, the most noteworthy of which are the following.

1. All of the participants appeared eager to share the lived experiences of their role as an accompanying partner.

2. A majority of the participants (8) indicated that the decision to relocate was predicated on economic considerations.

3. The majority of the participants (11) expressed a positive response to their adaptation to their newly found role as an accompanying partner and were generally not resentful about their altered life circumstances. Only one expressed, somewhat mildly, his burnout with the number of moves and the desire to realize his personal dreams.

4. None of the participants were so affected by attempts to adapt to their new environment that they had to employ certain strategies to cope with stress.

5. The majority of the participants (11) expressed a strong sense of partnership and familial comfort for their new role.

6. The majority of the participants (10) did not appear to be interested in the reactions of extended family and friends to their new role.

7. None of the participants appeared concerned about the community’s view of the new arrangement.

8. A majority (nine) did not object to the female partner being the primary breadwinner.
9. The majority of the participants (nine) did not feel their manhood threatened by the sole breadwinner status held by the female. The remaining three participants expressed only modest concern stemming from having temporarily relinquished their status as the primary breadwinner.

10. All of the participants, without exception, exuded a strong sense of self-confidence and security about themselves.

11. At least nine of the participants explicitly expressed an egalitarian approach to family, spousal support, domestic duties, and a willingness to sacrifice for the greater collective good, whereas the other three did so in varying degrees.

12. None of the participants lived with anyone outside of their immediate family and only one needed to provide caregiving duties to an elderly parent living with them.

13. The value orientation that emerges from these interviews emphasized choice over control.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The previous chapter provided a synopsis of the sentiments of the participants as represented in their narrative accounts. Their stories have been presented as expressed by them in their own words. Thematic analyses of the interviews highlighted similarities and differences in the participants’ styles of adaptation to a non-traditional role, while identifying certain correlations between their respective experiences and their gender ideology. Additionally, the recurring themes that emerged from the participants’ deconstructed narratives that exposed contrasts and similarities were revealed. This final chapter discusses the implications of these findings, insights that have surfaced, and the identification of the overarching unifying strand that appeared to have permeated those themes.

This study sought to explore the subjective role of male accompanying partners’ perception of the dyadic partnership, their respective familial bonds, and the community at large in their efforts to adapt to a nontraditional role. Having explored answers to the initial research questions in the context of adapting and coping, two theories were
discussed earlier (adaptation and coping congruence), which prompted the question of whether they applied to the men in this study. It was posited that when in a new environment, in an unfamiliar situation, or when confronted with a potentially life-changing event, a major part of the adapting process involved using coping strategies to minimize stress. However, using the wrong coping mechanism can be ineffective and exacerbate an already uncomfortable situation in mismatched domains; in addition, what may appear highly threatening or stressful to one individual may be insignificant to another (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

Having interviewed, interacted with, and observed the men in this study, it was clear that most did not appear to be going through extraordinary stress, such that they deemed it necessary to employ extreme strategies to cope with their circumstances. The majority perceived their transition to their new physical environment, as well as the adaptation to their new found role as a stay-at-home dad or husband, to be relatively smooth or an inconsequential part of life. Even with the men who expressed angst about coping with certain inconveniences, it was still clear that they viewed them as minor and not deal breakers for the partnership.

The study further explored some of the misconceptions and “taken-for-granted” gender-based rationalities about the role of accompanying partners, dual earners, and caregivers. In the review of the academic literature, Bielby & Bielby (1992), state that a man who espouses a traditional gender role philosophy views himself not only as the primary provider, but also as the decision maker, rejecting the idea of allowing his partner’s job to disrupt his own career advancement. Moreover, according to Schreiber (1998), men were usually not questioned about their willingness to forego a family in
order to pursue a career. These notions underscore the prevalence of the double standard that has traditionally governed society. However, neither of these traditional views dominated the outlook of the participants included in this study.

In contrast to the findings of McNulty and Boyko (2004) presented in Chapter Two, who found that while accompanying female partners felt a greater sense of buy-in or commitment relative to their partner, they also harbored more resentment toward their husband’s decision to relocate. However, consistent with the current study, male partners felt a greater sense of commitment and ownership toward the partnership than to the career of their spouse. Additionally, while McNulty and Boyko found that the greatest challenge confronting the male partner was adapting to the nontraditional role of a male accompanying partner, the current study revealed no such finding.

As a result of this study, the researcher has been provided with an opportunity to explore how accompanying partners adapt to their nontraditional roles, and to examine their attitudes about gender and gendered expectations. This study’s findings have provided additional avenues for potential expansion in the future with a significantly larger sample size to broaden the knowledge and understanding of the unique role of the accompanying partners.

Because of the overwhelming sense of egalitarianism portrayed throughout many of the narratives, presented in this study, a future study that delves into issues of how the workplace and its employers can and should be more accommodating to male spouses as they adapt to their nontraditional roles, would seem prudent. In such a study, companies that allow for paternity leave and accommodate fathers in other ways as they have
traditionally done for women could be explored. Another important question is how to increase public awareness of this emerging workforce trend.

On a related note, with the sanctioning of civil unions by the federal government, the impact of these actions on workplace policies warrants investigation. Plainly, a number of other studies could be generated on this study.

One of the participants referred to his role as the domestic leader and expounded on a phrase he coined “leading from behind.” The terminology is quite intriguing and possibly worthy of greater exploration. During the interviews, the participants were asked to suggest a different terminology if not pleased with either the term accompanying partner or trailing spouse. In fact, most seemed satisfied with either term, but one participant suggested the term “domestic CEO” while another suggested “supporting spouse” or “supporting partner;” and yet another opted for “leader who follows.” The study produced a number of recommendations worthy of further exploration such as how to enhance public awareness about this and related workplace issues.

Another issue worth exploring is the correlation between the post-modern egalitarian philosophy or ideology embraced by the majority of the participants and education levels. It has been suggested that a high correlation exists between those with high education levels and those who embrace equality, fairness, or egalitarian philosophy in dyadic partnerships. According to a study by Gerson (2010), the younger generation is significantly more disposed toward embracing an egalitarian philosophy than are more mature individuals. However, despite the size of the population (12) in the study, the median age was 47.7, which can hardly be referred to as a younger generation.
Finally, although external factors, such as temporary layoffs, discharges, or emphasis on women hires for greater diversity in the workplace, could have contributed to the creation of the male accompanying partner phenomenon, how the participants managed those external factors was not the focus of this study. A future study that investigates the broader macro-economic forces and their impact on this phenomenon could produce interesting results. All of these issues can and should be examined in the future perhaps using a quantitative or mixed-methods approach.

Metacognitive Reflection

The purpose of this study emanated from a conversation with a colleague years ago. The current research and narrative study about male accompanying partners has highlighted the desire to delve further into this topic. The objective was to ascertain precisely how men similarly situated men perceived their roles and how effectively they adapted to it. Curiosity arose about the issue of whether and to what extent such individuals underwent serious psychological changes or had to employ coping mechanisms as they dealt with potentially life changing circumstances. Moreover, a healthy interest surfaced about the attitude of men who occupied the nontraditional role of accompanying partner and the prevalence of gendered expectations in this population of men. Much has been learned from this study; however, it has precipitated a desire to deepen an understanding and develop even greater expertise in devising ways to provide more awareness about this topic.
APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL GUIDE

INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Individual conducting the Interview:</th>
<th>Name of Individual Interviewed: (Confidential For use of one interviewer only)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date and Interview:</td>
<td>Job Title of Individual Interviewed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Company Name of Individual Interviewed:</td>
<td>Interview Setting:</td>
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<td>Length of Interview:</td>
<td>Record Number:</td>
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Session I

Opening Statement

First of all, I want to thank you for agreeing to take the time to participate in this study. I know you could be engaged in any number of other things at this time, but I believe that your input will be quite valuable to this research and help others to understand the male accompanying partner phenomenon. I understand from this Consent Form you’ve signed, that you voluntarily consented to share with me your experiences as a male accompanying partner, is that correct? Feel free to ask any questions you wish to have clarified about the form or about this interview process. What I do wish to emphasize is that fictitious names will be used in this study to assure you of complete anonymity. If at any time you decide that you would like to stop, just let me know. The purpose of this research project is to
explore the lived experiences of male accompanying partners and their adaptation to a nontraditional role.

A) *First, please tell me a little about your background (birthplace, family, academics, and career goals).*

1) Would you describe to me your typical day as a stay-at-home dad and full-time caregiver?

2) How would you characterize your role as a male accompanying partner and/or stay-at-home dad?

3) Would you tell me how you manage your work and non-work priorities (work-life balance relating to a dual earner)?

4) How do you feel about your personal role as an accompanying partner (or stay-at-home husband or dad)?

5) What are your sentiments about the issue of which partner is the primary breadwinner or about who makes the most money in a relationship?

6) How do you feel about your role in relation to the family?

7) How would you describe your relationship with the present community in which you live compared to your previous community from which you relocated?

8) How confident are you about coping with your new environment and how have you managed to adapt? Please explain.

9) Can you describe for me the “pros” and “cons” of having relocated? Let’s start with the pros or what you consider to be the positive benefits.

10) Now, on the flip side, what would characterize as the negative aspects.
11) How would you compare your sense of independence before relocation and the present?

12) In what areas of your life do you feel in control and in which do you not feel a sense of control? Why is this so?

13) Would you describe what changes, if any, you believe you had to undergo in connection with relocating?

14) Do you think the responsibility of child care and household duties rests primarily with the female partner? (If applicable)

Session II

B) Can you walk me through your personal journey leading up to your becoming a male accompanying partner?

1) Describe the environment of your previous location (physical, social network) and what were the circumstances prompting the move?

2) Describe the situation in the household at the time the decision was being made to transition to a new environment.

3) Describe the scenario involving the decision-making process leading up to relocating. Did you jointly arrive at the decision to move after ongoing lengthy discussions or was the decision spontaneous and unilaterally made?

4) How did you prepare for this relocation – personal research, discussions with family and friends outside of the immediate family, assistance from the company for which the partner would be employed?
5) What expectations did you have about relocating? Has relocating adversely or positively impacted any long term-goals that you had already set? How so?

6) What role did gender play in your attitude about being the accompanying spouse because of your partner’s employment opportunity? In other words, were you concerned about what family and friends would say?

7) How would you characterize the differences between your previous physical environment, and the current situation (i.e. home, weather, and cleanliness)?

8) Have any major changes occurred since relocation and, if so, how do you feel about those changes? Did any obstacles prevent a smooth transition?

9) Can you identify one specific example or critical event that provided the greatest happiness or was the most pleasant as an accompanying male? Describe the circumstances.

10) Can you identify one specific example or critical event that provided the most frustration or was the most challenging as a male accompanying partner? Describe the circumstances.

11) Looking forward, what do you see as your goals for the future and how do you plan to achieve them?

More specific demographic questions may include some variations of the following:

a) How long have you been married or cohabiting?
b) How many individuals are in the household? (Children, parents, or other family members)

c) What is the length of time you lived at your previous location?

d) How long have you been living at your current location?

e) What is your current employment status?

f) Would you provide a brief history of your employment?

g) What was your overall attitude about employment prior to relocation?

h) What is your educational level?
# APPENDIX B: LONG TERM PERSONAL GOALS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>“I recently started my own business here and I am looking forward to being at the top of my game in my trade. I would like to become an entrepreneur and it seems like that’s beginning to fall in place.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burt</td>
<td>“When we talk about future goals and I’m 44; I don’t have a retirement ’cause I’ve lived off my wife the last you know five six years and um I don’t earn an income, so I don’t have any social security you know coming in, so I said there's gonna be a point I'm gonna need to do something.”</td>
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<td>Charles</td>
<td>“I’m full time with a prepaid legal company. Just want to continue doing that for a while, be able to take off now and then on a boat, go on cruises and just enjoy life. We both love to travel. I also hope to have grandkids someday.”</td>
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<td>David</td>
<td>“My long term goal is - my wife is really happy at her job, so that she continues to grow and develop at that company and her career continues to grow and develop because I mean she's happy and that's great. My daughter continues to be healthy and continue to grow and learn where she is, that's great. Uh probably buy another house in the next 18 months and hopefully make this this firms a success that's pretty much where it ends for me, those are the big those are the big deals.”</td>
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<td>Harold</td>
<td>“I have more access to people at the university now that I am here and I’ve thought about starting some other businesses on the side with old colleagues. Here, there is a lot of focus on entrepreneurship and there’re more resources I may be able to tap into and can be helpful going forward. It actually could help me from a career standpoint.”</td>
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<td>Jake</td>
<td>“I think relocating has helped. One, you know, I love to travel; I can see different locations and spending some time in them gives you a true flavor for the location, and what that geography has to offer; learn a little bit about the people and that kind of thing, so that's kind of - it's broadened that; it's allowed me to experience those personal goals that I've had. Uh, as far as the job performance, it's helped in in broadening my experience that I'm able to draw from in meeting the needs and providing service, and so and they like that in the different positions, and so it's worked out; it's worked out well”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jonathan</td>
<td>“I like the company I'm at, I wish I was making more money, I know we all say that but like I said I took a considerable step back to take the position. I really do like the job though. Uh I'm hoping that what they said to me when I interviewed is something that comes to fruition like you know there has been some growth there that I've seen, they said there'll be some uh some opportunities for personal growth as well so uh I told myself I would give it 18 months to two years to see if that's the case. If not, then I'll have at least 18mo to two years back in the workforce and I can start looking for that salary that I was used to but we make it work know the way it is. Like I said, we've been able to save to go on a vacation and things like that which we haven't been able to do in years so you know we're ok. As long as we're happy, right?”</td>
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<td>Pseudonym</td>
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<td>Khari</td>
<td>“My goals for the future are to finish my degree, get my masters, become a clinical supervisor within five years, have are negative, ceasing certain behavioral patterns that I think are negative in my life, improving upon myself and have one or two other children in the next six to eight years, own a home and get out of debt. To improve my relationship with my wife, grow in unity and intimacy. My goal is to remain faithful to, to – like right now some of the things that helping my wife to improve herself, meanwhile pursuing education and career goals, home ownership, and I guess what you call the American dream.”</td>
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<td>Martin</td>
<td>“One of my goals is to have a good relationship with my wife and be healthy and survive as long as I can reasonably survive in a healthy environment. I don’t have a retirement mentality.”</td>
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<td>Rex</td>
<td>“We eventually, somewhere within the next few years, will be looking for a property to purchase down in New Orleans probably buy before retirement, fix it up, and we’re looking forward to that time, to go back to New Orleans. A lot of our family and friends who have - some who have relocated since Katrina all of them want to come back and we all kind of individually have our own plans of going back to New Orleans, and in the end, uh when my wife retires, I tell you those golden parachutes at that executive level are pretty good. That’s another good investment uh uh they call a return on your investment of this sacrifice. Those are gonna be pretty nice.”</td>
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<td>Slim</td>
<td>“Relocating has positively impacted my long term goals, because it put me in contact with some very prominent people that I otherwise might not have met, and for that I am grateful. Basically I plan to continue with the process we’re going on and get into state of retirement mode and to a point where we can both retire comfortably and live the remainder of what we have in the highest fashion.”</td>
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<td>Steve</td>
<td>“I’ve been able to do things that I would never have done in Montana. Definitely the job I took at the union, I never would have imagined having done something like that and then actually recently getting into the ARL (Alternative Route to Licensure) program was another great opportunity to expedite the process to get a license. So I want to finish the ARL program with my master’s degree, get my license and teach.”</td>
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APPENDIX C: SUPPLEMENTAL INTERVIEWS

The following includes abbreviated versions of the narrative findings from the remaining participants.

Adam is a licensed contractor who accompanied his wife, Betty, a practicing attorney, to Las Vegas over ten years ago. They have been married 15 years and had relocated with one son, who has since become an adult and has move out of the household. Adam emphatically stated that their decision to move to Las Vegas was made with relative ease when his wife was offered employment with a law firm here. Prior to moving, although his wife had been licensed to practice law in Louisiana, she knew she did not want to remain there indefinitely and wanted to relocate. Thus, in an ironic twist, Betty initiated the move by proposing a few prospective cities to Adam and wanted his thoughts about where they should move so she could begin preparations for taking the bar examination there. Of the proposed cities, Adam suggested Las Vegas. He spoke freely about having been the primary breadwinner while his wife attended Tulane Law School and his lucrative income.

Like his father before him, Adam had been employed first as a longshoreman, and then as an independent contractor who renovated homes and also did interior decorating. The jobs were becoming somewhat sparse in Louisiana and he felt he was losing his sense of independence, which further drove his enthusiasm about supporting Betty’s interest in relocating. Adam was convinced he would not have a problem securing employment or starting up a new company once he arrived in Las Vegas because of his confidence in his skills and his entrepreneurial spirit, which buttressed his desire to support Betty’s career by leaving Louisiana.
Another driving force behind his enthusiasm about leaving was centered on the fact that as an African American married to Betty, who is Caucasian, they were often confronted with problems in a community that still saw them as “an odd couple.” “I think the biggest factor involving our decision to relocate was economic advancement based on what lawyers were being paid in Louisiana and the lack of opportunities that I was confronted with. But also, being an interracial couple in the South, having some people constantly giving a second look at us and uh, it was not as easy to be in that kind of situation and comparing that to Vegas was totally a life changing experience.” Adam said he strongly felt strongly that once they moved to Las Vegas, the reception would have been significantly better or different.

The fact that his wife was the primary breadwinner presented no problem for Adam. “My family back home was very supportive of my leaving Louisiana primarily for economic reasons. They knew and I knew I would be able to make a better life for myself and my family.” Adam accompanied Betty at least four times - from Louisiana to Nevada, to Texas, back to Las Vegas, then to Arizona, and then back to Nevada. “It don’t bother me to be an accompanying partner; I frankly have no issues in that regard.” Since moving to Las Vegas, Adam has been able to start his own business renovating homes and as an interior decorator. “I feel much more independent now. I have started my own business and feel like in about two years I’ll be at the top of my game.” They have been dual earners for the past 13 years.

Harold is a software/hardware sales consulting director residing in Florida. He is married to Katie who is a doctoral student, and they have one child, a 10 year old son. They have been married for 16 years. Harold’s narrative is not entirely congruent with
the majority of the other participants. Although he accompanied Katie to a new location in connection with her career, it was not predicated on financial reasons or on Katie’s employment. Harold trailed or accompanied Katie in connection with her educational career when she decided to return to graduate school to earn a doctorate in education. “We discussed locations of various graduate schools for her to attend. I didn’t think twice about it because we had been planning for some time. This move was predicated 100% on where she wanted to go to school.” Harold said that he has great flexibility with his work obligations because he can manage his workload from home, and because he is responsible for North America, he has the luxury of living wherever they chose.

On the philosophical question of whether the responsibility of household duties and child caregiving rest primarily in the domain of the female, Harold stated: “No. Definitely not! We are co-owners or partners in the business of our family. We are equal owners of our property, so we are equal in terms of the responsibilities. Yes, we divide up certain responsibilities for the things we do. We have a very common sense approach to things. We do whatever we need to do to make life easier for all of us.”

Addressing family and community comments or reactions to his role as an accompanying spouse, Harold said certain community members had made certain comments that he later learned about from Katie. Surprisingly, he indicated that the comments were relatively complimentary as they expressed admiration for his supportive role.

Charles is a 65 year old semi-retired entrepreneur who married Phyllis when she was a first year medical student and he was working for the United States Postal Service. While working at the post office, Charles had also attended night school to become a
mortician. After Phyllis graduated from medical school, Charles accompanied her from Philadelphia, along with their young son, to a small town in Texas where she would be the only Pediatrician. From Texas they moved to Kentucky before finally settling in Las Vegas. Their decision to move was a mutual one after discussing the pros and cons.

Charles said it never bothered him to function in the role of an accompanying partner. He began to explain in a somewhat lecturing manner, “You got to be on the same page; you got to have ultimate trust, compassion for each other and understanding. So communication is the key,” he emphasized. To the question about child caregiving, he stated that it had to be the responsibility of both parents.

Apparently very relaxed in his surroundings and with the questions, Charles was quite pleased to share various aspects of his experience as an accompanying partner. He particularly relished telling the story about the time he had announced to his colleagues at the post office that he was about to marry a doctor. He laughed as he recounted how they were admonishing him that she would eventually kick him to the curb. Then with an air of poetic justice, he again laughed aloud and seemingly boasted, “How long has it been now? 38 years?” He went on to say, “They haven’t always been the best, but they certainly weren’t the worst. You have to have the same desires, want the same things. We love to travel – get on a boat a take a cruise now and then.
## APENDIX D: CODE SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inductive Categories</th>
<th>Participant Responses</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Partnership**      | - We were friends before we started dating  
                        - This is who I wanted to be with  
                        - We agree on most things.  
                        - We are co-owners in the business of our family.  
                        - My wife’s happy and so that’s a great place to be.  
                        - Doesn’t matter if she makes more than me  
                        - We always discuss matters before making any major decisions  
                        - I’ll support her 100%  
                        - Understanding, dialogue, agreement before any opportunity arose  
                        - Decisions are made jointly about things like relocating  
                        - Me and my wife’s families are very close  
                        - My wife and I are interdependent and our children are dependent |
| **Career**           | - She is very career oriented  
                        - I’ve always been a hard worker and money is a big driver for me  
                        - I can always resume my career. It doesn’t bother me.  
                        - I have found my niche and can now resume my career  
                        - I’m flexible and feel like I can do anything  
                        - We decided I would take a year off to raise my son and that became four years and two sons  
                        - I didn’t mind putting my career on the back burner for the family  
                        - I had been used to job security and then my expectations were doused  
                        - I was confident enough to support her  
                        - I understood what I had to do, so I buckled down and did it  
                        - I kind of put my career on hold to do that…and I took a step back because of it  
                        - whoever can make the most money talent wise  
                        - Not being primary breadwinner doesn’t challenge my manhood  
                        - She could be in my shows as domestic caregiver  
                        - If my wife does it, God bless her. I’m doing it, so God bless me  
                        - If we were down different career paths, maybe I would be the primary breadwinner  
                        - As long as I have a job helps to relieve any pressure  
                        - Sometimes I wish it was the other way around and I was the primary breadwinner  
                        - We’re able to afford this type of lifestyle because of her |
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<tr>
<th>Inductive Categories</th>
<th>Participant Responses</th>
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| Household            | • I’ll do housework and whatever needs to be done  
• I give it 100%, just like cleaning the house etc.  
• She recognizes my sacrifice  
• This is how I support her  
• I don’t particularly like housework but I do it – maybe not quite like she would like it, but…  
• I think it should be evenly distributed and men need to pick up the pace… it should be equal  
• It was tough, but a lot of fun being home with the kids  
• I was not geared psychologically to assume the role I did  
• I’m the primary caregiver for the kids  
• I’m not a Mr. Mom. I’m doing what I do from a male perspective.  
• I was Mr. Momming it  
• I was the only Mr. Mom and maybe one other  
• Only role my son has ever seen me play  
• …and fortunately, I could do about everything, pretty decent cook and kind of meticulous cleaning things  
• It was something I wasn’t prepared for – getting up early before the kids, preparing breakfast, getting them ready for school  
• That’s something I wanted to experience and wouldn’t change it for anything in the world |
| Caregiver            | • I never question my manhood because of my status now  
• Not being primary breadwinner doesn’t challenge my manhood  
• That’s a non-issue with me.  
• I do what I do, so it’s really a moot issue  
• Community folks assume because I’m a man that I am the primary breadwinner  
• I don’t have a problem with gender issues  
• There’re no emasculating issues here  
• It never made me feel less than a man to carry a diaper bag and a baby |
| Manhood              | • Leader who followed my wife  
• Leading from behind  
• Doesn’t matter who takes the reins  
• She works, but when it comes to the home front, that’s my territory; I’m the domestic CEO  
• As I see it, men lead the family  
• I gave up primary breadwinner role, but not the role of head of household |
<p>| Leadership           |                       |</p>
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<tr>
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| Temporary Status     | • Will eventually own my business  
                      | • One day I may be working and she’s at home  
                      | • I wouldn’t trade this experience for anything.  
                      | • One day they’ll be grown  
                      | • Soon we’ll both be working  
                      | • …but thought I would assume the leading role again financially  
                      | • Who knows, the roles might be switched one day |
December 7, 2014

Dear ____________________________:

My name is Donald Bernard, a Ph.D. Candidate in Workforce Education and Organizational Leadership at University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). As part of my doctoral research for my degree, I am conducting a study in connection with my dissertation entitled: A Narrative Study of Male Accompanying Partners: Adaptation to a Nontraditional Role in Dyadic Partnerships. The Principal Investigator is Dr. Yeonsoo Kim, a member of the faculty at UNLV, who is my dissertation advisor.

In this study, accompanying partner refers to a male partner (spouse) who has trailed his female partner to another geographical location based on her career employment. This study will deal with issues about how male accompanying partners view their role and how they cope as part of their adaptation to this new role. Therefore, I am inviting you to participate in this important study by participating in two video recorded interviews, for approximately 60-90 minutes each, and share your lived experiences relating to this phenomenon. Preferably, I would like to conduct face-to-face interviews in your natural home setting where I will ask the questions as provided in the attached Interview Guide.

The research will be done upon your agreement to participate. After you agree to participate in this research and sign an informed consent form, as the researcher, I will contact you by the method you prefer such as e-mail, mail, or phone to finalize a mutually agreeable time and setting.

If you have any questions, please call me at (702) 287-8948 or email me at bernar35@unlv.nevada.edu

Thank you for your time and cooperation, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Donald J. Bernard
REFERENCES


McNulty, Y. (2005), The Trailing Spouse Survey: A Four-Year Study of Accompanying Spouse Issues on International Assignments (unpublished manuscript)


United States Department of Labor (2004). Defining and delimiting the exemptions for executive, administrative professional, outside sales and computer employees: Final rule, 69(79), 22260-22274.


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Dissertation Title

A Narrative Study of Male Accompanying Partners: Adaptation to a Nontraditional Role in Dyadic Partnerships

Dissertation Examination Committee

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Organizational Development Consultants, Dayton, OH – Consultant 1988 - 1989
State of Louisiana, Baton Rouge - Secretary of Commerce 1980 - 1982