

1985

## The advantages and disadvantages of the dual-career life style and suggested therapeutic coping strategies

James Patrick Aspinall  
*University of Northern Iowa*

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

Copyright ©1985 James Patrick Aspinall

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Aspinall, James Patrick, "The advantages and disadvantages of the dual-career life style and suggested therapeutic coping strategies" (1985). *Graduate Research Papers*. 2016.  
<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/2016>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

---

## The advantages and disadvantages of the dual-career life style and suggested therapeutic coping strategies

### Abstract

The term "dual-career" life style, coined by Rapoport & Rapoport, is defined as a life style in which both heads of household pursue a career while still maintaining a family life together with at least one child (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1984). The term "career" usually refers to a job a person is committed to and requires commitment in terms of time and energy in acquired training. In a career, the person is "highly salient" and wants to develop and pursue a career by advancing in pay, position, power, and responsibility (Parker, Peltier, Willeat, 1981).

THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE DUAL-CAREER LIFE STYLE AND  
SUGGESTED THERAPEUTIC COPING STRATEGIES

---

A Research Paper  
Presented to  
The Department of Educational Administration  
and Counseling  
University of Northern Iowa

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree  
Master of Arts

---

By  
James Patrick Aspinall  
July 1985

This Research Paper by: James Patrick Aspinall

Entitled: The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Dual-Career Life  
Style and Suggested Therapeutic Coping Strategies

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the  
Degree of Masters of Arts

6-25-85

Date Approved

Ann Vernon

Director of Research Paper

6-27-85

Date Approved

Norman McCumsey

Second Reader of Research Paper

6-25-85

Date Received

Ann Vernon

Graduate Faculty Adviser

Norman McCumsey

Head, Department of Education  
Administration and Counseling

6-27-85

Date Received

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES. . . . .	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Statement of the Problem . . . . .	3
Limitations. . . . .	3
Definition of Terms. . . . .	3
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE . . . . .	5
The Disadvantages of A Dual-Career Life Style . . . . .	6
Identity Dilemma . . . . .	6
Overload Dilemma . . . . .	9
The Children. . . . .	11
Reapportionment of Household Task . . . . .	11
Social-Psychological . . . . .	13
Standard of Living . . . . .	14
Role-Cycling Dilemma . . . . .	14
Social Norm Dilemma . . . . .	17
Occupational Structure. . . . .	18
Social Network Dilemma . . . . .	20
The Advantages Of A Dual-Career Life Style . . . . .	22
Psychological Gains . . . . .	22
Gains for the Children and The Family . . . . .	24
Gains To Employers and Society . . . . .	26
Gains to the Husband's and Wife's Health . . . . .	26
Economic Gains . . . . .	27

	Page
3. A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE LITERATURE ON THE DUAL- CAREER LIFE STYLE AND THE INTERVIEWS OF FIFTEEN DUAL-CAREER COUPLES . . . . .	28
Procedures . . . . .	28
Advantages . . . . .	28
Disadvantages of a Dual-Career Life Style . . . .	30
Household Tasks . . . . .	30
Child Care Tasks . . . . .	33
The Social Life of a Dual-Career Couple . . . .	35
Job Priority . . . . .	36
4. SUGGESTED THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES A COUNSELOR CAN USE TO HELP DUAL-CAREER COUPLES COPE WITH STRESS . .	37
5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	43
REFERENCES . . . . .	46
APPENDICES . . . . .	52
A. Interview Questions . . . . .	53

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Questionnaire Results on Household and Child Care	
Tasks . . . . .	35

## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

The term "dual-career" life style, coined by Rapoport & Rapoport, is defined as a life style in which both heads of household pursue a career while still maintaining a family life together with at least one child (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1984). The term "career" usually refers to a job a person is committed to and requires commitment in terms of time and energy in acquired training. In a career, the person is "highly salient" and wants to develop and pursue a career by advancing in pay, position, power, and responsibility (Parker, Peltier, Willeat, 1981).

One of the most significant social developments of the twentieth century was women joining the work force (Hiller & Philliver, 1980). Currently 62% of all married women in the United States work outside the home (Maples, 1981). Rice (1979) estimated that in 1978 the number of dual-career families in the United States was three million. By 1985, considering swollen university enrollments in which women pursue career-oriented goals, greater career opportunities for women, as well as greater social acceptance of dual-careers, it is estimated there are five million dual-career families (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1984).

The increasing numbers of this new life style bring with it many advantages and disadvantages. Most of the advantages are in form of the financial gains with increased income and financial security, and psychological gains in terms of personal growth (Amatea & Cross, 1983).

Most of the disadvantages revolve around the transition from traditional family norms and roles to a new, untested, and experimental dual-career model (Hopkins & White, 1978). The dual-career life style has added new dimensions and complications to the stress already associated with a traditional marriage. Behavior in a dual-career life style often lags behind the ideals of a dual-career life style, possibly causing stress, as men and women try to allocate time between career and family.

The deviation from traditional male and female sex roles also causes many problems for a dual-career couple. During this transitional period there is a lack of role models, and no established normative guides for raising children. Dealing with society's demands, and the expectations of both careers (Hester & Dickerson, 1981; Rice, 1979).

The many problems that are associated with the dual-career life style, combined with the increasing number of dual-career marriages, will most likely increase the amount of stress in these marriages, as well as have implications for society (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1984; Rice, 1979). These added dimension and complications demand that counselors educate themselves about the advantages, unique concerns, and conflicts of the dual-career life style. "Counselors can raise their competence with this population by increasing their awareness of the typical dysfunctional coping strategies and the most effective adaptive strategies as reported by dual-career partners and counselors in the published literature" (Parker et al., 1981, p. 18). As counselors become more knowledgeable of the advantages and

disadvantages which are unique to these couples. They will be better equipped to help these couples cope with one's stresses. In addition, couples considering a dual-career life style need to be educated so that some of the stresses can be minimized due to awareness of the issues (Burke & Weir, 1976; Rice, 1979).

#### Statement Of The Problem

The purpose of this study is to identify the advantages and the common areas of stress in a dual-career life style, and to suggest some therapeutic strategies that have proven effective in helping dual-career couples cope with this strain.

The specific questions addressed are:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a dual-career life style?
2. How does the advantages and disadvantages of a dual-career life style as documented by the literature compare with the survey of fifteen dual-career couples?
3. What are some effective therapeutic strategies a counselor can use to help dual-career couples cope with stress in a dual-career life style?

#### Limitations

The focus of this paper is basically on the review of literature. The survey of fifteen dual-career couples was primarily designed to determine if the advantages and disadvantages of the couples' life style was consistent with or validated the literature.

#### Definition Of Terms

Dual-career: Both heads of a household pursue a career and at the

same time maintain a family life including children (Parker et al., 1981).

Career: A job that requires a high degree of commitment, is highly salient, and has a continuous developmental quality (Parker et al., 1981).

Egalitarian: Role-sharing by husband and the wife each of the traditionally segregated family roles (Haas, 1980). They would equally share the responsibility for earning an income, and the wife's job would have equal priority; domestic chores, with men equally responsible; handyman roles, with the woman equally responsible; equal sharing of child care roles (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1984).

Equity: A fair allocation of both opportunity and constraint. The concept emphasizes fairness of division, not equality of division. Time is a very significant factor in this process. One spouse may carry more pressure, demands, and work than the other spouse at a given point in time. The other spouse may carry the load at another point in time with the intent they will balance out in the long run (Yogev, 1983).

## Chapter Two

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The majority of the literature suggests that while there are many advantages to a dual-career life style there is also a high amount of stress (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1984; Rice, 1979; Shaevitz & Shaevitz, 1980). Although the economic and psychological advantages often outweigh the disadvantages of a dual-career life style, the disadvantage of stress is one of the most pronounced features of the life style (Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980).

Rhona and Robert Rapoport of the Tavistock Institute in London have become synonymous with dual-career life style (Hopkins & White, 1978). The Rapoports analyzed the socially structured (common experiences) dimensions of stress that exist in a dual-career marriage (Maples, 1981). They isolated five select dilemmas, which in their nature set up strain that are common to all dual-career couples. The five select dilemmas are:

1. Identity dilemmas (sex role dilemmas).
2. Overload dilemmas (work overload).
3. Role cycling dilemmas (stress at different stages of the career or life).
4. Dilemmas that result from discrepancies between personal norms and social norms.
5. Social network dilemmas (less time with friends and family).

The five dilemmas of stress in a dual-career life style will be used as an organizational framework in the review of literature to

describe the disadvantages of a dual-career life style.

### The Disadvantages of a Dual-Career Life Style

#### Identity Dilemma

Identity dilemmas in a dual-career marriage are a product of "discontinuities" between early gender-role socialization and current wishes (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Yogev, 1983). The sign of masculinity in our culture is the "bread winner" role, with successful work role experiences. Femininity is related to the domestic area, supplying the "expressive needs" of the family (Heckman, Bryson & Bryson, 1977; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Shaevitz & Shaevitz, 1980). Dual-career couples who deviate from these traditional male and female roles experience an identity conflict, which results in stress (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976).

The male and female sex roles originally grew out of the division of labor used in earlier times. They were necessary at one time for the survival of mankind (Goldberg, 1975). Today these roles are no longer applicable (Hopkins & White, 1978). Despite the fact that these roles are now obsolete, the male dominance ideology is deeply embedded in our minds and culture. It will take time and much effort to completely reject these ideas, because these attitudes and beliefs have been institutionalized by all aspects of life, law, custom, church, and school (Goldberg, 1975).

Employment of women outside the home has been a catalyst for changing sex role differentiation in society (Goldberg, 1975). This has brought about attempts to establish a more egalitarian type relationship, where the husband and wife participate equally in all

areas of life, sharing traditional sex segregated roles. Few couples achieve a truly ideal egalitarian relationship because of the attitudes and beliefs learned in early socialization are highly resistant to change (Goldberg, 1975; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Yogeve, 1983).

When the internalized "shoulds" regarding these traditional male and female roles conflict with more egalitarian roles attempted by dual-career couples, tension and strain is the outcome (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Skinner, 1980).

In the process of modifying their behavior to a more egalitarian level, each spouse has a point where their discomfort rises. This limit is the "identity tension line, the degree that each individual can transcend his or her social role conditioning in regard to taking tasks that have been traditionally associated with the spouse of the opposite gender" (Rice, 1979, p. 74).

For women the tension lines usually revolve around the self-concept of being a good wife and mother, as well as other people's criticism of her regarding her ability as a wife and mother. The tension line of many wives has expanded, and today there is an increased commitment to their professional role in addition to the family and home (Johnson & Johnson, 1980).

Likewise the male tension line has expanded to accept the wife's right to pursue a career, but his tension line as well as her's has remained the same regarding the wife's responsibility to be a good wife and mother (Johnson & Johnson, 1978; Shaevitz & Shaevitz, 1980). Despite the fact that some husbands may do some 50% of the domestic

chores, the responsibility of the home remains on the wife's shoulders (Hester & Dickerson, 1981; Shaevitz & Shaevitz, 1980).

Although tension lines have expanded with regard to pursuing a career, new tension lines have been drawn regarding competition with males, especially one's spouse. Earlier studies revealed an increase in the wife's status over that of her husband caused stress and conflict (Hornung & McCullough, 1977; Pearlin, 1975; Santos, 1975). Recent studies by Hiller and Philliber (1980), indicated that status had no affect on the marriage. Earlier studies tended to show a higher amount of stress because of a more rigid tension line revealing the gradual change in the attitude concerning the status of women (Heller & Philliber, 1980).

The above studies gave only two optional moves a women could make if she has a career with a higher status than her husband and it was causing conflict in the marriage. The two options were divorce or leaving the labor market. Hiller & Philliber (1983) amend their (1980) study, saying more women have a third option, and that is the option to change jobs. The strongest finding was that women in non-traditional jobs (jobs usually held by men) were more likely to become divorced, to leave the labor market, or move to a lower status position than women in traditional jobs (traditionally held by women). Hiller & Philliber (1983) believe the wife's employment in a position traditionally occupied by men creates tension between the husband and wife. Their study showed if a wife had a non-traditional job of higher status than her husband, she was five times more likely to take a demotion than women in traditional female careers. If they did not take a demotion,

the wife would change jobs to an equal status career that was more traditional for women.

Parker, Peltier, Wolleat (1981) indicated that the higher the education a woman obtains, the more committed she is to her career. Bird (1979) found that the higher the commitment to work the more the "tension line" or the "mother/wife myth" disappears. Women with higher work commitment have more say in family decisions, give in less to disagreements with her husband, and have more freedom in and outside the home (Safilios-Rothchild, 1970).

For men the tension line usually revolves around power and dominance concerning the erosion of his central position in the family (Hester & Dickerson, 1981; Rice, 1979). They see their self-worth decreasing as their wife's self-worth is increasing. Hester & Dickerson (1981) claim a husband's tension lines are broken if he has to share in the housework, although many men are expanding their tension line in this area. Specific tension lines men have to contend with will be covered when discussing overload dilemma.

According to Burke & Weir (1976), women have an easier time crossing the sex barrier by taking up a career than men do because many women had some early socialization experience working in part-time jobs before they got married. Many men had no or very little experience in their new roles of homemaking, childrearing, and fulfilling an emotional support role; thus the husband might have more identity or adjustment problems than the wife (Burke & Weir, 1976).

#### Overload Dilemma

The traditional role of the wife is a support role, a back up

person for her husband and his career. The support role not only helps the husband physically by doing a variety of domestic tasks for him, but also psychologically by giving the husband encouragement, giving him "strokes", giving him a sense of purpose, and giving him appreciation for his efforts (Hester & Dicerson, 1981; Hunt & Hunt, 1977). Barnett (cited in Parker, Peltier, Willeat (1981) claimed that high achieving individuals, or individuals pursuing a career "need reliable narcissistic self-esteem enhancing gratification -- the kind that comes with recognition 'strokes' and appreciation for one's efforts" (p. 15).

In a dual-career marriage both spouses need these "strokes", and it is hard for both to give each other these strokes when they both come home tired. If one or both partners feel they are not being rewarded or recognized, this will hurt their self-esteem, and they will perceive their spouse as being insensitive and uncaring (Parker et al., 1981).

Hunt & Hunt (1977) question the ability of the dual-career family to give this support, which is necessary to make the husband or wife competitive in the job market with people who do have this support. They questioned this because there is no longer a full time back up person for either the husband or the wife. The domestic back up activities such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, and childrearing are now "overtime" work for many dual-career couples (Heckman et al., 1977; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Shaevitz & Shaevitz, 1980). Often when these tasks do not get done in a dual-career marriage there is a dilemma, which Rapoport & Rapoport (1976) termed overload dilemma.

Rapoport & Rapoport (1976) suggested overload dilemmas are affected by four conditions: the children, reapportionment of household tasks, social psychological, and the degree to which a couple aspires to a higher standard of living.

The Children. Time pressure is one of the main sources of stress in a dual-career life style, and children create many demands on the couple's time, especially for the wife (Keith & Schafer, 1980; Shaevitz & Shaevitz, 1980). The husband may claim to have egalitarian attitudes toward childrearing or may say he helps with the children, but it usually only amounts to babysitting the children. For most dual-career couples the tension lines remain somewhat traditional with the mother being the primary psychological parent and the one responsible for raising the children (Johnson & Johnson, 1977).

In a Johnson & Johnson (1977) study of role strain in dual-career women, 116 women reported having some role strain in their marriage, and 64% of the 116 women said the strain centered on childrearing problems. The problem the women had centered around guilt and fatigue with the women in the study feeling they met their children's physical needs, but not being there to meet the children's emotional needs.

One other source of strain for the dual-career couple, and especially for the woman, is finding adequate child care or day care (Skinner, 1980). This will be discussed further when discussing social network dilemmas.

Reapportionment Of Household Tasks. Much of the left over "residue" or "vestiage" of traditional sex roles resides in the area of domestic tasks (Haas, 1980). Even though the wife is committed to a career, she

is still basically responsible for the housework (Bryson & Bryson, Johnson, 1978; Haas, 1980; Holmstrom, 1973; Poloma & Garland, 1971; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1977).

Pepitone-Rockwell (1980) state that women who work and have household responsibilities work approximately seventy hours per week. In De Frain's (1979) study of dual-career couples, he found that the wife did 77% of the cooking, 68% of the dishwashing, 73% of the cleaning, 74% of the laundry, and 85% of the ironing. Husbands did 79% of service on the car, 77% of the lawn work, 85% of the household repairs, and took out the garbage 71% of the time.

Even when there is a conscious effort to be more egalitarian as were the couples in De Frain's study, there was still an imbalance in sharing the domestic tasks. In many cases the wife is just as responsible for this imbalance in domestic tasks as the husband because of early sex role socialization (Haas, 1980). For example, many wives have house cleaning standards higher than her husband's, or her husband might fail to do a task as soon as the wife wants it done, causing the wife distress, or causing the wife to do the task herself (Haas, 1980; Keith & Schafer, 1980). This is also equally as true with women doing home repairs and car maintenance, her standards might not be as high as her husband's, or get it done when he wants it done.

Maples (1981) state dual-career couples eventually move away from the stress of overload by being able to afford domestic help. This contradicts several studies that conclude that working women made no more use of paid domestic help than wives who were full time housewives (Bird, 1979).

As a result of their early sex role socialization, many professional career women want it known that they can also manage the household as well as hold a career, and do a good job at it also. Being a career woman she can be accused of being less of a homemaker and mother, so it is important to her to convey the image of a competent wife and mother (Haas, 1980).

Social-psychological. Many of the activities in the home are what Hester & Dickerson, (1981) and Rapoport & Rapoport (1976) call intimate areas of life. These may include activities such as preparing meals, sewing on buttons, car maintenance, and household repair. These activities assume much symbolic significance from traditional roles and values, which many dual-career couples are still emotionally invested in (Hester & Dickerson, 1981; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). If these activities are not done, or not done to expected standards, it can cause stress (Hester & Dickerson, 1981; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). In situations where the husband does help out, this can also generate conflict for both the wife and husband because the wife may feel guilty if the husband helps (Haas, 1980; Keith & Schafer, 1980). Even when there is a conscious effort to be more egalitarian it does take skill to do some domestic chores (Haas, 1980). Many husbands lack the skills for cooking and sewing, and many of the wives lack the skills for auto repair and home repair.

Couples in Haas' (1980) study tried to cope with this lack of skill by having the knowledgeable spouse teach the other spouse the new skill, but spouses often times lacked the discipline to get through the frustration and disappointment accompanying the learning of a new

skill. They also did not want to give up leisure time to learn it, and it was easier just to let the expert spouse do the job (Haas, 1980).

Most research says behavioral expectations are becoming less traditional, but this research does not focus on the distribution of specific household tasks. Keith & Brubaker (1977) discovered tasks found least likely to be distributed equally were those traditionally performed by males and females, such as car maintenance for males and laundry for females.

Standard of Living. Improving the family's standard of living is one of the major motivations for the dual-career life style (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Bird, 1979). Maintaining a higher standard of living usually includes a nice home and garden, attractive decor, cleanliness, high quality meals, hobbies, activities, vacations, and maybe a vacation home. Maintaining this high standard usually causes additional overload for the dual-career couple (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Shaevitz & Shaevitz).

One response to this overload is to accept a lower standard of living, eliminating or decreasing some activities either domestically or socially (Heckman et al., 1977; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). As shown earlier, it is difficult to lower the standard of domestic tasks so leisure time is usually the first to be sacrificed when encountering this overload situation (Heckman et al., 1977). Reducing leisure time usually involves spending less time with friends and relatives.

#### Role-cycling Dilemma

Another major stress in a dual-career marriage cited by Rapoport & Rapoport is the role-cycling dilemma. In some aspects, role-cycling is

similar to identity and overload dilemma. The role-cycling dilemma refers to an "attempt by the dual-career couple to mesh their different individual career cycles with the cycle of the family" (Skinner, 1980, p. 474). Role-cycling dilemmas come from organizational problems at critical stages in one's family life or career, for example, the birth of a child, or a job promotion (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Skinner, 1980). These critical points or transition points are times in the family or career cycle where restructuring of roles occur causing stress in the marriage (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Skinner, 1980).

Many couples try to reduce this stress by avoiding having more than one transition at a given time. Many dual-career couples try to establish themselves in their careers before having children to reduce the stress (Parker et al., 1981; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). This period where the couple is establishing themselves in their career is usually one of the first transition points a dual-career couple goes through, and this includes the first years of marriage, or the first year of a job. The stress comes from adjusting to the division of labor with the family, as well as from modifying schedules and routines (Booth, 1977).

Couples who delay having children to establish themselves in their career often face a common role-cycling dilemma called the "thirty year baby panic". The dilemma is to have children or not to have children, and how they should raise the children if the couple decides to have them (Hall & Hall, 1979; Parker, et al., 1981).

When a dual-career couple do have children the husband's and wife's early socialization often wins out over the couple's egalitarian

views, and the wife becomes the primary psychological parent and the one responsible for raising the children (Johnson & Johnson, 1977; Parker, et al., 1981). The wife is the one who usually interrupts her career to care for the children, or she has the stress of being the one responsible for the children, if not actually doing the child care tasks herself (Johnson & Johnson, 1977; Parker, et al., 1981).

Job promotion and relocation are another critical stage or transition point in the family and career cycle which are accompanied by stress. This stress may derive from anticipation or real redistribution of resource, power, and influence (Parker et al., 1981). For example, a wife might actually get promoted or just worry about getting promoted to a higher status job than her husband, which would in many cases be stressful for both the husband and the wife. Sex-role tension plays a part in the transition points in the career role-cycle as it involves the redistribution of power and resources (Parker et al., 1981).

Often a promotion will require relocation to another geographical area which is usually a dilemma for a dual-career couple. All the problems a traditional family goes through in the process of deciding to move, and moving is increased 100% in a dual-career marriage (Maples, 1981). Often a dilemma with job relocation in a dual-career marriage is whose job has priority and which spouse has to cope with growth discrepancies in the two careers (Parker et al., 1981). Many wives consider their job as secondary to their husband's job (Hickman et al., 1977).

Mortimer believes that guilt caused by departure from the

traditional family norm caused the couple to assign, even if unconsciously, a greater priority to the husband's career in terms of decisions related to geographic relocation.

Older couples in their later stage of the role-cycle find dual-career life style likeable and advantageous, because there are no children (Heckman et al., 1977). There is less strain as you grow older in a dual-career, because older persons are established and have more dual-career work experience. In contrast, a young couple is acquiring new roles that require innovative behavior, which is especially stress producing for them (Keith, 1979; Booth, 1977). A young couple may also be adjusting simultaneously to two new careers and the birth of a new child produces an overwhelming amount of stress.

Another dilemma or source of stress when relocating is finding two satisfying jobs in the same area (Bird, 1979; Parker et al., 1981; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). One spouse cannot consider relocating if there is no opportunity for the other spouse. The need to have good jobs in order to move fosters a conservative attitude when bargaining for advancement (Parker et al., 1981).

#### Social Norm Dilemma

The traditional sex-role norm stem from the division of labor during the industrial revolution (Rice, 1979). These traditional roles have been programmed into the marital aspirations and expectations of most contemporary individuals, and reinforced by the media, which reflects prevailing societal norms (Rice, 1979, p. 7). Also, social institutions such as schools have a major impact in socialization, promoting traditional norms through sex-role stereotyping.

Many characteristics of the social norm dilemma are similar to the identity dilemma. The difference between the two is the identity dilemma is a personal conflict within oneself whereas the social norm dilemma is a conflict with society's sex-role norms. A couple experiences a social norm dilemma internally, but there is still a dilemma between the couple's new personal norm and the norms of society. The discrepancies between one's personal norms and the norms of society result in stress (Forgarty, 1971; Shaevitz & Shaevitz, 1980). Intellectually, society approves of dual-careers, but the issue still exists latently producing "covert uneasiness", anxiety and guilt (Hester & Dickerson, 1981).

Occupational Structure. Many professions in our society expect their employees to give 100% commitment to their jobs, with the husband, wife and family coming second to the career. Traditionally, the wife was expected to support her husband's career, entertaining and such on behalf of her husband's profession. Many women now have careers of their own, and there is some difficulty in their relationships with their husbands, regarding their traditional support role (Skinner, 1980).

Not only is the dual-career life style a big adjustment for the husband and wife at home, but adjustment also depends on the discriminatory practices from the work world itself (Gurtin, 1980; Rosen et al., 1975). According to Rosen, Ferdee & Prestwick (1975) and Gurtin (1980), managers and executives in the world would have traditional sex-role expectations from career women and their husbands. For example, in order to minimize disruption in the marriage and family

life, many organizations do not place women in positions requiring travel, or consider them for promotions that would require relocation. They also may not be considered for a job that requires more dedication, because they assume her family has more priority in her life (Gurtin, 1980; Rosen et al., 1975). This role expectation for employees frustrates the formation of positive attitudes and career commitment of dual-career women (Gurtin, 1980; Rosen et al., 1975). A wife's attempt at role redefinition may lead to increased frustration, resentment, conflict, and stress for both partners (Rosen et al., 1975).

Heckman, Bryson & Bryson (1977) claim feelings of competition between dual-career couples in the work world can cause stress in the marriage. "Feelings of competition and/or resentment between marriage partners come from pressures outside the marriage (which often serve as a catalyst) and as a function of the marriage partner's personality" (Heckman et al., 1977).

Geographic mobility is another source of strain caused by the occupational structure and society's expectations. With regard to job movement, wives usually experience more of the stress (Bird, 1979; Duncan & Perrucci, 1976; Holmstrom, 1973). Duncan & Perrucce (1976) found during this transitional period where many of the wives do have some say in the decision making process, that the couple's egalitarian orientation toward decision making was not applied concerning job moves. Duncan & Perrucce suggest institutional constraints are, in part, responsible for highly traditional job movement decisions.

As stated earlier, many organizations require an employee to give

100% commitment with their families coming second to their careers. This results in many organizations not considering the need for flexible hours making it possible to match the husband's and wife's work hours. Nor are many organizations concerned with the problem of day care. Only a very small minority of organizations provide day care for the children of their employees (Bird, 1979; Gurtin, 1980; Rice, 1979).

The inflexibility of the occupation structure of the United States has worked against dual-career couples who are trying to balance the conflicting demand of home and work (Bird, 1979; Gurtin, 1980; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). The dual-career life style is hindered by the slow process of social change. The United States is the only industrialized western society that lacks a state-run subsidized system of day care for children, and only a very small minority of organizations having flexible hours for their employees (Rice, 1979).

#### Social Network Dilemma

The social network dilemma refers to the dilemma a dual-career couple has between the heavy investment in both the family and professional spheres of their life and the couple's leisure time, activities, and relationships with friends, relatives, and work associates outside the immediate family (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1984; Hopkins & White, 1978). Many couples are tired when they get home and have little energy left over for many leisure activities (Shaevitz & Shaevitz, 1980). There is not much free time when a couple has to take care of family and household duties when they get home from work. This overload results in a curtailment of activity which weakens the social

network with relatives, friends, and fellow employees

(Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Rice, 1979).

The dual-career couple's social network is a loose knit network because it is operating in three different areas, involving a separate social network for each of the husband's and wife's career, another relating to kin, and another from the family life (Bebbington, 1973).

Dual-career couples tend to pick other dual-career couples as their friends because of common interest or background (Johnson & Johnson, 1977). The couples usually do have similar views on marriage, careers, and children (Johnson & Johnson, 1977). The couple usually acts jointly in choosing friends more so than traditional couples do (Bebbington, 1973; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). This type of friendship formation seems to result from a dilemma where there is a wish to keep a friendship relationship, and a wish to protect oneself from it, in anticipation of the criticism a dual-career couple will get for their unique life style (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). This is also true for the kinship network, but kinship relations cannot be handled as friendships, thus kinship networks are usually the chief source of social network dilemma or stress (Schaevitz & Shaevitz, 1980).

The couple also may intentionally avoid some friends and kin to avoid criticism of their life style. Many dual-career families often tighten the family boundries making them isolated from traditional support (Johnson & Johnson, 1977). As the family becomes more isolated from kin and friends, the couple places increased expectations on each other for satisfaction of intellectual, sexual, emotional, and social

needs (Johnson & Johnson, 1977). This makes the family very vulnerable because of the lack of alternative of other people to meet the emotional needs of the family (Johnson & Johnson, 1977).

### The Advantages Of A Dual-Career Life Style

Most of the literature is focused on the negative aspects of a dual-career marriage (Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980). If the dual-career life style is so negative, why is it becoming such a popular life style? The logical answer is that the gains of a dual-career must outweigh the negative aspects of the life style (Rice, 1979; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). Rather than avoiding the stress, many dual-career couples choose to accept the stress because other values are important to them. For the sake of social justice and sense of equity, couples are willing to take on the stress of a dual-career marriage and sacrifice personal comfort, and degrees of life satisfaction (Hester & Dickerson, 1981; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976).

### Psychological Gains

Many of the benefits of a dual-career life style are in the form of intellectual, psychological, and self-esteem gains they offer the dual-career couple (Hester & Dickerson, 1981; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; St. John Parson, 1978). Parker, Peltier, Wolleat (1981, p. 15) stated "after all, the 'necessity' for two careers is usually psychological rather than an economic matter for these couples, and thus is most likely to represent what Maslow termed 'neurosis as a failure of personal growth'". Today, because of our current economic situation, the necessity for two careers is probably more economical, or perhaps more of a balance of the two rather than more psychological.

The marriage relationship is stronger if each partner is economically independent, and the wife and husband feel they are achieving in both areas of their life, career, and home (Epstein, 1978; Hester & Dickerson, 1981). If both spouses receive a salary, they have some control over this money and legitimizes for both spouses the notion that they should have more power (Rice, 1979). As a result, women in a dual-career marriage have more power and more say in the decision-making process (Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980; Hall & Hall, 1979; Rice, 1979; Bird, 1979).

A woman also increases her power by participating in a career. By increasing her social interaction she develops more self-confidence, knowledge of alternative situation, and develops social skills that she can use to influence her husband (Bird, 1979).

One side effect of sharing power and decision-making is an increase in communication between the dual-career couple (Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980). The wife is also a more interesting person because of her career, and the couple can now share their experience (De Frain, 1979; Holmstrom, 1972; Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976).

In the Burke & Weir (1976) study comparing dual-career couples with traditional couples, they found working wives communicated more with their husbands than did housewives. Working wives communicated more of their feelings they had towards their spouse, feelings about their own personality, feelings about their sexual relations, and feelings they had towards their spouse's parents. Burke & Weir (1976) also reported a greater perceived agreement with their wives on a

number of different behaviors and values. For instance, dual-career couples were more likely to resolve disagreements by mutual give and take, displaying affection to each other more often, and having better sexual relations (Burke & Weir, 1976; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970).

A major psychological gain dual-career couples help bring about is change in society's attitudes and norms. Although attitude may fail to influence individual behavior in many instances, marked attitude shifts in the population at large are likely to produce socio-political climate conducive to structural change (Mason & Czajka, 1976; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). For example, the attitude of the 1960's which view it acceptable for women to work if it did not change the husband's life style, set a conducive climate so a more equalitarian relationship could evolve in the 1970's (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976).

A more equalitarian relationship is a possible gain some dual-career marriages are experiencing. Studies by Keith & Burbaker (1977) showed a more equalitarian ideology shift where the husband and wife in a dual-career life style changed towards a more equalitarian relationship than traditional couples. They also found sex role attitudes and behavior expectations are becoming less traditional with the advent of extra family activities that involve both the participation of the husband and the wife.

#### Gains For The Children And The Family

A dual-career marriage is beneficial to the husband because he often shares more with the child care, and this has a positive effect on both him and his children (De Frain, 1979; Epstein, 1978; Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). The husband can

often spend and enjoy more time with his family because there is less pressure of him being the sole breadwinner. He now has the option to give less time to the "rat race", or not to pursue the high pressured better paying job (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976).

A dual-career couple schedules more time to be with their children, and have a joint concern for their children, whereas in a traditional family the wife usually has the sole responsibility for the children (Epstein, 1978). The dual-career parents give the time they spend with their children more quality more so than quantity, so the children gain in the quality of the relationship (Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980).

The mother, as a role model, gives the daughter a wider career horizon (Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980). They did not see themselves as less competent than men as did many of the daughters of non-working mothers.

The mother's modeling had a positive effect on the daughter's academic achievement and career achievement (Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980).

Pepitone-Rocwell, (1980) indicated career mothers who worked use less coercive discipline and practice more empathy and less hostility towards her children. Birnbaum (1975) studied the attitudes of professional women towards their children and compared them with non-working mothers. Birnbaum found that professional women got pleasure in their children taking responsibility for themselves. He also found they were less overprotective, less self-sacrificing, and less tied to their children. As a result, the children of dual-career marriage are usually more independent, responsible, and resourceful (Johnson & Johnson, 1977; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; St. John Parson,

1978).

Studies have found for many women a career provides them with a feeling of being useful and competent while also providing them with an opportunity for accomplishment, personal growth, and creativity (Bird, 1979; Burke Weir, 1978; Holmstrom, 1972; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). Many husbands also gain from seeing their wives happy and developing.

#### Gain To Employers And Society

Employers and society as a whole can gain from dual-career couples. Woman in the past would leave the labor force when they got married, or at the arrival of their first child, usually never to return. Today, many career women will return to work, or at least return to another job later, so she is not lost to the work force which is beneficial to society economically (Bird, 1979).

Employers gain from having more talent to pick from. "The masculine and feminine difference, which in any case not to be exaggerated, are not a matter of superiority and inferiority, but of qualities which are compliments in high-level management as well as lower down" (Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980, p. 20).

#### Gains To The Husband's And Wife's Health

Housewives more often claim to be happier than working wives, but in many objective studies by physicians, psychoanalysts, and marketers, working wives fair better both physically and mentally (Bird, 1979). Working wives have less psychosomatic symptoms of neurosis, insomnis, ulcers, and headaches than housewives (Burke & Weir, 1976). Working women tend to keep more active physically, jogging and exercising more (Bird, 1979). Work is also a good way to

relieve anxiety and guilt, and to receive the gratitude of those who received help (Nadelson & Nadelson, 1980).

### Economic Gains

Although not always the main goal of a dual-career life style, economics is one of the main benefits or gains of a dual-career life style, which sometimes indirectly contributes to the psychological gains.

The financial benefits give the wife more power in the family and more influence in the decision-making process (Hester & Dickerson, 1981; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976).

The biggest gain for both husband and wife is for both to have an equal opportunity to attain the ultimate accomplishment of a mature adult, and realize a meaningful work role and a meaningful relationship (Hall & Hall, 1979).

### Chapter Three

#### A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE LITERATURE ON THE DUAL-CAREER LIFE STYLE AND THE INTERVIEWS OF FIFTEEN DUAL-CAREER COUPLES

##### Procedures

Fifteen dual-career couples were surveyed through personal interviews and a questionnaire. A list of eight interview questions and a questionnaire were designed to elicit as many possible responses from the fifteen sample couples on the advantages and disadvantages of a dual-career life style (see Appendix). The questionnaire was also designed to determine if the advantages and disadvantages of the couple's life style were consistent with or validated the literature on the dual-career life style.

Using Goldenberg & Goldenberg's (1984) definition of a dual-career couple, couples were selected on the basis of both spouses bring committed to a career while still maintaining a family life together with at least one child. Most of the sample couples were employees of the University of Northern Iowa who held teaching or administrative positions. Only a few spouses worked outside the university setting, with most of these in the field of education.

##### Advantages

All the fifteen couples interviewed stated there are advantages and disadvantages to a dual-career life style, but all stated the advantages outweighed or overshadowed the disadvantages. This finding was consistent with Rapoport & Rapoport's (1976) and Shaevitz & Shaevitz (1981) studies that claim the advantages outweigh the

disadvantages.

In the interviews, the one advantage that got a unanimous consensus was that economic gains were one of the most rewarding gains of dual-career life style. This finding was consistent with Hester & Dickerson (1980) and Bird's (1979) studies that claimed improving the family's standard of living is one of the major motivations for the dual-career life style. The literature recognized economic gains as a major motivation and advantage of a dual-career, but much of the literature claimed the "necessity" or the advantages of two careers were usually more psychological than economical. The couples that participated in the interviews tended to stress financial gains more so than the literature suggested they would, but as stated earlier, the economic situation in the last few years may be making the economic side of the dual-career life style more of a necessity than it was in the past.

One advantage almost unanimously stated by the husbands interviewed was that their wife was a more interesting person because she was working. This is in agreement with studies done by DeFrin (1979), Pepitone-Rocwell (1980), Rapoport & Rapoport (1976), and Holmstrom (1972).

Most husbands also said their wife had a more sense of fulfillment to their life because she was working, and had a better self-image. When asked the question, would you spare your spouse the need to work, many husbands claimed their wife's career made their wife happy and fulfilled and when their wife was happy, their married life seemed to be better. This seems to support the literature that claimed

psychological gains are also an important factor for having a dual-career life style.

Increased communication was another advantage mentioned by almost all the couples, agreeing with Nadelson Nadelson's (1980) study. A majority of the couples stated that their communication improved because they had more interesting things to talk about as a result of both spouses working. Many of these couples said they also had to increase communication with each other to coordinate schedules and tasks, also in accordance with Pepitone-Rocwell (1980) study. The study indicated increased communication was a side effect of sharing decisions and sharing power.

#### Disadvantages of a Dual-Career Life Style

##### Household Tasks

Lack of time to do everything they wanted to do was the major disadvantage mentioned by all the couples interviewed, which correlated with studies made by Hall & Hall (1978), Keith & Schafer (1980), and Shaevitz & Shaevitz (1980), who indicated lack of time was a major obstacle in a dual-career life style. Scheduling the time they did have was a related problem and obstacle mentioned by one half the couples interviewed which also correlated with the literature. Many of the couples said the university allowed them to have a more flexible schedule which alleviated some of the scheduling problem.

A major disadvantage mentioned by many of the couples was difficulty completing some or all of the household tasks. When asked if they hired outside help, only one fifth of the couples hired outside help. This was consistent with the study of women physicians in

Detroit by Dr. Ruth Phillip's study, which concluded that working wives made no more use of paid domestic help than wives who were full-time housewives (Bird, 1979).

The couples were asked if there was a tension line or a point they could not transcend because of their early social role conditioning with regard to tasks that have been traditionally associated with the opposite sex. A majority of the couples said they would do any domestic task unless they lacked the skill, or if one spouse enjoyed doing a particular task more than another. The husbands most often mentioned sewing and ironing as skills they lack, and the wives most often mentioned auto repair and home repair as skills they lack. Haas' (1980) study was very consistent with the couple's statements, mentioning sewing and cooking as skills husbands lack and auto and home repair as skills wives lack.

A questionnaire was given to the couples which broke down the various household and child care tasks (see Appendix).

On the questionnaire the couples were asked who assumes more responsibility for household tasks. There was an almost even split between sharing the household task equally and the wife primarily assuming the responsibility for household tasks. Only one couple said the wife was totally responsible for the household tasks.

There was no truly egalitarian couples in the survey. Most couples split their responsibility of the various household tasks between sharing them equally and the wife primarily responsible for them. These results are consistent with studies done by Bryson & Bryson, and Johnson (1978), Holmstrom (1972), DeFrain (1979), and

Rapoport & Rapoport (1976), which indicate some progress toward a more egalitarian relationship, but a true egalitarian relationship is not very common. Question five in the questionnaire also indicated some progress or a more egalitarian relationship. The couples were asked if their spouse's participation in household tasks increased, decreased, or stayed the same as a result of adopting the dual-career life style. Close to two-thirds of the couples said the wife's participation decreased while the husband's increased, and one-third said their participation stayed the same.

Most of the outside tasks were primarily or totally done by the husband with the exception of landscaping tasks where most wives shared in the participation. Almost all of the wives in the survey said they did not have the skills for auto and home repair. Mowing the grass and shoveling the snow was done more along traditional lines, with most husbands either primarily or totally responsible for these tasks.

The questionnaire is in agreement with research that claimed behavioral expectations were becoming less traditional, it is also consistent with Kieth & Brubaker's (1977) and Abdel-Ghany & Nichals' (1983) studies that indicate household tasks least likely to be distributed equally were those "more" traditionally performed by males and females. Keith & Brubaker (1977) gave examples of car maintenance for males and laundry for females. The questionnaire supported by the interviews did indicate more women totally or primarily doing the wash, more so than sharing it equally with their husband. It also indicated that more husbands primarily or totally do more traditional non-skilled tasks of shoveling snow and mowing lawns.

### Child Care Tasks

The couples unanimously said the dual-career life style had a positive affect on their children. They claimed their children were more independent and responsible as a result of having to do more for themselves, which correlates with studies done by Johnson & Johnson (1977), Rapoport & Rapoport (1976), and St. John-Parsons (1978).

Close to half of the couples mentioned that they were role models for their children. They said they wanted their sons to know that it was acceptable for men to do housework, and for their daughters to know it was acceptable to have a profession. Pepitone-Rocwell's (1980) study indicated role modeling was a positive effect on the dual-career life style.

A majority of the couples equally shared most child care tasks. The literature said husbands would help with the child care tasks, but the wife still had the responsibility for the children. The questionnaire as well as the interviews are not as definite as the literature on who assumes more responsibility for the children. When asked the question who stayed home with the children when they were sick, and who runs their children to lessons or practice, the spouses seemed to share the responsibility equally. There also was an equal split among the number of wives and husbands who primarily did these tasks.

The extra amount of flexible time most of the couples who work for the university received might possibly explain the husband's increased participation in these two activities, more so than was reflected by the literature. When questioned about who fed, bathed, and arranged

for the child care, one-third of the wives were primarily responsible for these duties, while two-thirds equally shared it with their husband, indicating that many wives may still be primarily responsible for the children.

Over two-thirds of the wives said their wife/mother role had priority over their professional/career role. About one-fifth of the wives said their career/professional role had priority. Over one-half of the men said their father/husband role had priority over their professional/career role. About one-third of the men said they were equally split on which role had priority. About one-fifth of the husbands said the career role had priority. These results were contrary to a Johnson & Johnson (1980) study which stated the wife in a dual-career was equally committed between her wife/mother role and her professional/career role.

The interviews and questionnaire indicated a joint concern for the children in a dual-career marriage, which was consistent with the literature. Many of the couples mentioned they spend quality time with their children, more so than quantity of time. Many wives felt they were concerned about not being with their children to fulfill their emotional needs as often as they would like to be. This statement was partially consistent with a Johnson & Johnson (1977) study which said dual-career wives felt worried and guilty by not being there for their children's emotional needs. The wives in the interview used the words "worried" and "concerned" rather than the word "guilt". Only one wife mentioned the word "guilt".

In the interviews, many couples said because they were concerned

about spending time with their children they actually do schedule or make an effort to spend more time with their children. This is in agreement with an Epstein (1978) study that showed dual-career couples try to schedule time for their children.

The literature indicates that dual-career fathers actually do spend more time with their children either by doing child care duties or just being with their children. This seems to hold true with a majority of the fathers interviewed. A few mothers in the interview said they spend more quality time with their children more so than if they were full-time housewives, because they were more concerned about spending time with the children. They stated a housewife may assume she spends much time with her children just because she is at home with them, but in reality she may not spend much quality time with them.

#### The Social Life Of A Dual-Career Couple

Almost all the couples said their social life was limited because of two careers. Bryson & Bryson's (1977) study is consistent with this, saying leisure time is first to be sacrificed as a result of a dual-career. Many of the couples said much of their social life is centered around family activities. Many said because of their concern about spending time with their children, much of their leisure time and social life included their children.

A majority of the couples claimed that most of their friends tended to be dual-career couples. This literature also confirms this saying these couples often share the same views on marriage, dual-careers, and raising children. Rapoport & Rapoport (1976) indicated dual-career couples often pick other dual-career couples as

friends to avoid criticism for their life style. The couples in the survey contradicted this by saying they received no criticism from their traditional friends or others because they believed dual-careers and working wives are becoming more the norm rather than the abnormal or unique. Their statements correlate with a Young (1980) study (cited in Maple, 1981) that indicated families where the mother does not work outside the home, where the father is the only worker, and the children are in school constitutes only seven percent of American families in 1980.

About one-third of the couples said they did get some criticism from their families, but some couples said this happened earlier in their careers. This correlates with Bebbington's (1973) and Hester & Dickerson's (1981) study that claimed the chief source of social network stress is usually from the family.

### Job Priority

The couples were asked whose job had priority when it comes to job promotion and job relocation. Nine out of fifteen couples said no job had priority, and when it comes to job promotion or job relocation, the spouse who got the best job offer would have the job priority. This is contrary to studies done by Duncan & Perrucci (1976) and Bird (1979), which claimed the couples egalitarian orientation toward decision making was not applied during job moves. Only one-third of the couples said the husband's job did have priority over the other's. Many of the males in the survey had job priority earlier in their careers, but some couples mentioned incidence where the wife's job had priority earlier in their career.

## Chapter Four

### SUGGESTED THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES A COUNSELOR CAN USE

#### TO HELP DUAL-CAREER COUPLES COPE WITH STRESS

It is evident that dual-career couples have added new dimensions and complications to the already burdened expectations of a marriage (Hopkins & White, 1978). Family therapist and marriage counselors have a unique opportunity to help dual-career couples who are experiencing the many strains of a dual-career life style (Hopkins & White, 1978). The task of a therapist is to help the client change and develop more accepting attitudes towards the role transition that both partners experience in a dual-career marriage (Keith & Schafer, 1980). The counselor should try to make the couple aware of the cost of maintaining traditional sex roles. The counselor can explore the reasons why the couple wants to keep some of these traditional sex roles, clarifying the culture expectations of these sex roles (Keith & Schafer, 1980; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Boswell, 1981).

A therapist can make the couple aware of the various options beyond the traditional family roles making the couple more open to change (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). The therapist can help create new patterns of living because the traditional male dominant family is no longer the norm (Keith & Schafer, 1980). The counselor can help the couple explore the cost and benefits of changing to a more egalitarian or equity relationship (Boswell, 1981). Specifically with household and child care tasks, a therapist can reorientate the couple to a more role sharing situation. The therapist can help the couple through the

residue from traditional sex roles and reallocate domestic tasks to a more egalitarian or equity situation (Price-Bonham & Murphy, 1980; Haas, 1980).

Studies of dual-career life style show many couples agreeing to the ideals of role sharing but not practicing role sharing fully (Bryson & Bryson; Johnson, 1978; De Frain, 1979; Gronsth, 1978; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Shaevitz & Shaevitz, 1980). Hester & Dickerson (1981) thought during this transitional period where behavior lags behind ideals, equity was a more realistic model than the egalitarian model. A counselor can help the dual-career couple become aware of the equity model and help them in the transition from traditional family roles to a more equity model (Hopkin & White, 1978). Shaevitz & Shaevitz (1980) defined equity as "a allocation both of opportunity and constraint". In other words, at any given point in time, one spouse will be carrying more of the pressure, demands, and work than the other spouse. The other spouse may carry the load at another point in time, with the intention they will balance out in the long run. Equity emphasizes fairness of division, rather than equality of division (Rosen et al., 1975; Shaevitz & Shaevitz 1980). This allocation of opportunities and constraints at different time limited periods will give the couple the feeling of fairness (Hopkins & White, 1978).

Counselors can use time limited behavior contracts as a means of enhancing equity, allowing the spouse to agree on specific terms rather than leaving them vague. Much of the stress in a dual-career life style comes from violating the couple's verbal or subconscious

contracts. Many couples may need a counselor to help change these contracts as the marriage grows and changes. Time limited contracts specify which one partner may have to carry the load of constraints, while the other partner enjoys the opportunities for a specific period of time (Hopkins & White, 1978). Time limited behavior contracts work well with dual-career couples, and they also enhance a feeling of fairness or equity (Hopkins & White, 1978). One important task for counselors is to show the dual-career couple the difference between equity and equality (Hopkins & White, 1978).

A counselor can help a couple reallocate domestic tasks to a more egalitarian or equity situation, and at the same time work through the resistance they might have to change (Price-Bonham & Murphy, 1980).

In order for concepts of equity and egalitarian to be successful, communication skills such as active listening, negotiating skills, and assertiveness skills should be taught by the therapist (Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980). Active listening is a good technique to resolve a conflict. It dispels communication blocks which promote situations of "I'm right, your wrong" (Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980). Assertiveness skills allow the dual-career couple to be more expressive about their opportunities and constraints. Training dual-career clients in negotiating skills will help them be more expressive in a non-judgmental way (Hopkins & White, 1978). Open expression will help reduce the anxiety and threat in a marriage and allow for a more equitable relationship (Hopkins & White, 1978; Rice, 1979).

Professional husband and wife co-therapy teams are a natural format for treating role identity stress that may result from a more

egalitarian life style (Rice, 1979). One of the chief advantages of co-therapy is role modeling (Rice, 1979). The co-therapist will most likely model roles counter to the traditional norms by working as equals, and not having the male therapist take charge (Rice, 1979).

A counselor must recognize that child care is an area of conflict. By exploring the quality of time the parents spend with the child, the attitude toward child care, and other aspects of child care, a counselor helps the couple reach decisions about the quality of care they want to give their child (Boswell, 1981). A quality of care that reflects the individual family's needs and values (Boswell, 1981). The therapist can help parents work through feelings of guilt they may have by leaving their children with a babysitter, or not spending the amount of time they would like to spend with their children (Boswell, 1981). The therapist can also assure them there is little empirical evidence that working mothers harm their children psychologically (Rice, 1979).

A counselor can also instruct the parents how to spend "quality" time with their children (Boswell, 1981; Johnson & Johnson, 1977). A counselor could also teach them child caring techniques that would alleviate strain in the future (Johnson & Johnson, 1977). For example, helping couples train the child to be self-reliant; displacing techniques that were non-punitive and more love-oriented; and choosing values for the child that would lead to self-direction (Johnson & Johnson, 1977).

Therapy can help career couples through different transition points when a couple is meshing their career cycle with their family cycle. A therapist can also help the couple decide what role has more

priority during the different transition points. A counselor could help them through common transition points as the birth of a new child, a new job, job promotion or relocation, and thirty year baby panic (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Shaevitz & Shaevitz, 1980). Rapoport & Rapoport (1976) suggested a three level approach a counselor can use to help ease the stress of the role cycling dilemma as well as the other dilemmas of a dual-career life style. First, increase the couple's awareness of issues involved in the stressful situation, so the couple can make more adaptive alternative decisions. Secondly, increase interpersonal skills which in turn improves the decision-making process. Third, increase external support because many dual career families do not receive all the emotional support or expressive needs within the family.

One result of the dual-career life style being a fairly recent phenomena is most couples have no established social norms to help them adjust to the life style (Hester & Dickerson, 1980; Rosen, Jerdee, Prestwich, 1975). A counselor can be innovative creating new patterns of living (Hopkin & White, 1978). With the current rapid change in society, the mental health profession should continue research and studies of the dual-career life style to monitor these changes and improve therapeutic strategies (Hopkins & White, 1978).

Holmstrom (1972) mentioned two social norms preventing sexual equality in a dual-career life style; the rigidity of the occupation and the isolation of the nuclear family. Holmstrom (1972, p. 169) states "if one wants to promote sexual equality and reinforce the two career family, one should remove these obstacles." A counselor, and

the mental health professions in general, can be innovative and influential, removing these obstacles in the occupational structure. The mental health profession should not only support equal rights and pay for women, but actively fight discriminatory practices as traditional sexual expectations (Holmstrom, 1972; Yogev, 1983). Traditional sexual expectations in the occupational structure not only frustrates the positive attitude and career commitment of women, but undermines the dual-carrier life style (Rosen et al., 1975). The mental health professions can promote flexible work schedules (Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980). A counselor needs to define and promote familial responsibility as a valid and socially acceptable reason for obtaining flexible work schedules (Pepitone-Rocwell, 1980).

## Chapter Five

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to identify the advantages and common areas of stress in a dual-career life style, as well as to suggest some therapeutic strategies that have proven effective in helping dual-career couples cope with the strain. The specific questions this paper was to answer were: 1) What are the advantages and disadvantages of a dual-career life style? 2) How do the advantages and disadvantages of a dual-career life style as documented in the literature compare with the survey of fifteen dual-career couples? 3) What are some effective therapeutic strategies a counselor can use to help dual-career couples cope with stress in a dual-career life style?

The advantages of a dual-career life style appears to be the economic and psychological gains. The belief that financial and psychological advantages outweigh the disadvantages of stress in a dual-career life style was the most significant finding in the comparison of the literature and the interviews. Economic gain was the one advantage most mentioned by the fifteen dual-career couples as the major motivation and advantage of a dual-career life style. Although the literature did not consider economic gains as the first priority for a dual-career life style, it did document it as one major factor for a dual-career life style.

The major disadvantage of a dual-career life style cited in both the literature and the survey was the lack of time for all the activities and responsibilities of the life style and the stress

generated by left over residue of traditional sex roles and social norms. In essence these are the major factors contributing to the five dilemmas described by Rapoport & Rapoport (1976) that cause stress in a dual-career life style. Lack of time for household tasks, children, friends, relatives and leisure time results in overload, role-cycling, and social network dilemmas. Identity and social norm dilemmas are primarily the result of the transition from traditional family model to a more egalitarian or equity model.

The literature indicates the basic strategies and techniques a counselor can employ to make the couple aware of issues involved in the stressful situation so that the couple can make more adaptive alternative decisions beyond that of a traditional couple. It is also vital to improve the couple's interpersonal skills which is essential to improving the decision making process.

Although the literature suggests many strategies and techniques a counselor can use to work effectively with a dual-career couple, counselors should also educate themselves to the unique concerns, conflicts and personal dynamics shared by dual-career couples (Parker et al., 1981). The purpose of the study was to investigate the dynamics of the dual-career life style. The dynamics and strategies that are relevant today will change tomorrow because of our rapidly changing society (Rice, 1979). Due to the rapid change in our society, both the counselor and the client need the strength to create new patterns of living (Hopkins & White, 1978). What this means to the counselor is that other strategies and approaches could and should be developed (Hopkins & White, 1978). Continuous research and studies of

the dual-career life style are needed to monitor the changes, and to adjust and improve therapeutic strategies (Hopkins & White, 1978). Rapoport & Rapoport (1975) assessed the status of the dual-career life style in our society when they stated, "Laissez-faire is not good enough, what is needed is a broad spectrum of approach to research and action programs of all kinds." (p. 432).

## REFERENCES

- Abdel-Ghany, M., Nickols, S. Y. (1983). In household work time: The case of dual-earner families. Home Economic Research Journal, 12, 159-161.
- Amatea, E.S., Cross, G.E. (1983). Coupling and careers: A workshop for dual-career couples at the launching stage. The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 62, 48-52.
- Bailyn, L. (1970). Career and family orientations of husbands and wives in relation to marital happiness. Human Relations, 23, 97-113.
- Bebbington, A. C. (1973). The function of stress in the establishment of the dual-career family. Journal of Marriage and Family, 37, 530-537.
- Bem, S. L. (1975). Sex role adaptability: One consequence of psychological androgyny. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 31, 634-643.
- Berman, E., Sacks, S., & Lief, H. The two-professional marriage: A new conflict syndrome. Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy, 1, 243-253.
- Bird, C. (1979). The two-paycheck marriage, New York: Rawson, Wade.
- Blood, R. O., & Hamblin, J. (1958). The effect of the wife's employment on the family power structure. Social Forces, 36, 347-352.
- Booth, A. (1977). Wife's employment and husband's stress: A

- replication and refutation. Journal of Marriage and Family, 39, 645-649.
- Boswell, J. (1981). The dual-career family; A model for egalitarian family politics. Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 15, 262-267.
- Bryson, R., Bryson, J., & Johnson, M. (1978). Family size, satisfactions, and productivity in dual-career couples. Psychology of Woman Quarterly, 1, 66-77.
- Ducan, R. P., Perrucci C. C. (1976). Dual occupation families and migration. American Sociological Review, 41, 252-261.
- De Frain, J. (1979). Androgynous parents tell who they are and what they need. The Family Coordinator, 28, 237-243.
- Forgaty, M. P., Rapoport, R., & Rapoport, R. (1971). Sex, Career, and Family. London: George, Allen, & Unwin.
- Goldberg, R. E. (1975). Sex role stereotypes and career versus homemaking orientations of women. In S. H. Osipow (Ed.), Emerging woman (pp. 91-115). Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merritt.
- Goldenberg, I., Goldenberg, H. (1984). Treating the dual-career couple. The American Journal of Family Therapy, 22, 29-38.
- Gurtin, L. (1980). The dual-career family. Journal of College Placement, 40, 28-31.
- Haas, L. (1980). Role-sharing couples: A study of egalitarian marriages. Family Relations, 29, 289-296.
- Hall, F. S., Hall, D. T. The Two-career Couple. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

- Heckman, N. A., Bryson, R., & Bryson, B. (1977). Problems of professional couples: A content analysis. Journal of Marriage and Family, 39, 323-330.
- Hester, S. B., Dickerson, K. G. (1981). Dual-career families: The stress and the rewards. Journal of Home Economics, 73, 26-31.
- Hiller, D. V., & Philliber, W. W. (1980). Necessity, compatibility and status attainment as factors in the labor-force participation of married women. Journal of Marriage and Family, 42, 353-364.
- Hoffman, L. W., & Nye, I. F. (1965). The Employed Mother in America, Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Holmstrom, L. L. (1972). The Two-career Family. Cambridge: Schenkman.
- Hopkins, J., & White, P. (1978). The dual-career couple: Constraints and supports. Family Coordinator, 27, 253- 259.
- Horner, M. S. (1972). Toward an understanding of Achievement related conflicts in women. Journal of Social Issues, 28, 157-174.
- Horung, C. A., & McCullough, C. B. (1981). Status relationships in dual-employment marriages: Consequences for psychological well-being. Journal of Marriage and Family, 43, 125-141.
- Howe, L. K. (1972). The Future of the Family. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Johnson, C. L., & Johnson, F. A. (1977). Attitudes toward parenting in dual-career families. The American Journal of Psychiatry, 134, 391-395.
- Keith, P. M., & Brubaker, T. H. (1977). Sex-role expectations associated with specific household tasks: Perceived age and employment differences. Psychological Reports, 41, 15-18.

- Keith, P. M., & Schafer, R. B. (1980). Role strain and depression in two-job families. Family Relations, 29, 483-488.
- Locksley, A. (1980). On the effects of wives employment on marital adjustment and companionships. Journal of Marriage and Family, 42, 337-345.
- Maples, M. F. (1981). Dual-career marriages: Elements for potential success. The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 60, 19-23.
- Mason, K. O., Czajka, J. & Arbers, S. (1976). In US woman's sex-role attitudes, 1964-1974. American Sociological Review, 41, 573-596.
- Nye, F. I. (1974). Effects on mother. In L. W. Hoffman & F. I. Nye (Ed.), Working Mothers, (pp. 207-225). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Oppenheimer, V. K. (1977). The sociology of women's economic role in the family. American Sociological Review, 42, 387-406.
- Orden, S. R. & Bradburn, M. (1968). Working wives and marriage happiness. American Journal of Sociology, 74, 392-405.
- Parker, M. Peltier, S., & Wolleat, P. (1981). Understanding dual-career couples. The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 60, 14-18.
- Pearlin, L. T. (1975). Status inequality and stress in marriage. American Sociological Review, 40, 344-357.
- Pepitone-Rocwell, F. (1980). Dual-Career Couples. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Poloma, M. (1972). Role conflict and the married professional woman. In C. Safilios-Rothchild (Ed.), Toward a Sociology of Woman (pp. 187-198). Lexington, Mass.,: Xerox.
- Poloma, M., & Garland T. N. (1971). The married professional woman: A

- study in the tolerance of domestication. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 33, 531-540.
- Price-Ponham, S., & Murphy D. C. (1980). Dual-career marriages: Implications for the clinician. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 6, 181-188.
- Rapoport, R., & Rapoport, R. N. (1969). The dual-career family: A variant pattern and social change. Human Relations, 22, 3-29.
- Rapoport, R., & Rapoport, R. N. (1971). Dual-Career Families. Baltimore: Penguin Books.
- Rapoport, R., & Rapoport, R. N. (1976). Dual-Career Families Re-examined. New York: Harper & Row.
- Rice, D. G. (1979). Dual-Career Marriage. New York: The Tree Press.
- Rosen, B., Jerdee, H. T., & Prestwich, L. T. (1975). Marital adjustment: Potential effects of discriminatory managerial attitudes. Journal of Marriage and Family, 37, 565-570.
- Safilios-Rothschild, C. (1970). The influence of the wife's degree of work commitment upon some aspects of family organization and dynamics. Journal of Marriage and Family, 32, 681-691.
- Santos, F. P. (1975). The economics of marital status. In C. B. Lloyd (Ed.), Sex, Discrimination, and Division of Labor (pp. 244-268). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Shaevitz, M. H., Shaevitz, M. H. (1980). Making It Together as a Two-Career Couple, Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Skinner, D. A., Dual-career family stress and coping: A literature review. Family Relations, 29, 473-480.
- St. John-Parson, D. (1978). Continuous dual-career families; A case

study. Psychology of Woman Quarterly, 3, 30-42.

Weir, T., & Burke, R. J. (1976). Relationship of wives' employment status to husband, wife, and pair satisfaction and performance.

Journal of Marriage and the Family, 38, 279-287.

Yogev, S. (1983). Dual-career couples: Conflicts and Treatment. The

American Journal of Family Therapy, 1, 38-43.

## APPENDIX

- 1) In your opinion what are the advantages and disadvantages of a dual-career life style?
- 2) Whose career has priority when it comes to matters of job promotion and job relocation?
- 3) What role has priority in your life, the wife/mother role or the professional/career role? The husband/father role or the professional/career role? Do you believe others might have perceptions of you neglecting your mother and household duties? (To husband) Do you believe others might perceive you as lowering yourself when you do domestic tasks?
- 4) How do you feel about your spouse working? Do you think you should "spare" your spouse the need to work?
- 5) Is there a tension line, or a point you can not transcend because of your early social role conditioning with regard to tasks that have been traditionally associated with the opposite sex?
- 6) What are the effects of a dual-career life style on your children?
- 7) How does a dual-career life style affect your social life?
- 8) Do you get much opposition or criticism from your family or friends as a result of deviating from traditional family roles? How does this effect you if it exists?

## APPENDIX

- 1) How many years have you been married? Average 13 1/2 years
- 2) How many children do you have? Average 2 children
- 3) Ages of children? Average Age 15

	Wife Totally	Wife Primarily	Shared Equally	Husband Primarily	Husband Totally
1) Who assumes more responsibility for such household tasks as:					
a) Cooking meals	W1 H4 5	W9 H4 13	W3 H5 8	W2 H2 4	
b) Deciding what to cook	W2 W2 4	W7 H7 14	W4 H5 9	W2 H1 3	
c) Washing dishes	W1 1	W6 H8 14	W5 H6 11	W3 H1 4	
d) Washing clothes	W1 H1 2	W8 H8 16	W4 H4 8	W2 H2 4	
e) Cleaning house	W1 1	W6 H6 12	W8 W8 16	H1 1	
f) Planning family social events		W3 H4 7	W12 H11 23		
g) Shopping	W1 H1 2	W4 H5 9	W4 H4 8	W5 H5 10	W1 1
2) Who assumes more responsibility for childcare tasks such as:					
a) Arranging for childcare outside the home	W2 H1 3	W5 H8 13	W7 H6 13	W1 1	
b) Puning your children to lessons or practice	W1 1	W3 H4 7	W8 H10 18	W2 H1 3	W1 1
c) Feeding	W1 H1 2	W6 H5 11	W7 H9 16	W1 1	
e) Bathing	W2 H2 4	W6 H5 11	W7 H8 15		
f) Staying home with the children when they are sick	W1 H1 2	W3 H5 8	W9 H7 16	W2 H2 4	

	Wife Totally	Wife Primarily	Shared Equally	Husband Primarily	Husband Totally
3) Who assumes more responsibility for outside maintenance such as:					
a) Mowing lawn		W2 H2      4		W8 W10    18	W5 H3      8
b) Shoveling snow			H1      1	W8 H9      17	W7 H5      12
c) Landscaping		W2 H2      4	W6 H5      11	W5 W5      10	W2 H3      5
d) Repairs around the house			W5 H1      5	W10 H12    22	W1 H2      3
e) Car Maintenance		W3 H2      5	W8 H9      17	W4 H4      8	
4) Do you hire outside help to do domestic and outdoor tasks such as:	Yes	No			
a) House cleaning	W4 H3      7	W11 H12    23			
b) Laundry	W1 H2      3	W14 H13    27			
c) Cooking meals	W1      1	W14 H15    29			
d) Lawn care	W2 H2      4	W13 H13    26			
e) House repairs	W4 H4      8	W11 H11    22			
5) a) The longer you have been in involved in a dual-career life style has the wife's participation in household tasks:	Decreased W9 H6      15	Increased W1      1	Stayed The Same W5      14		
b) The husband's participation in household tasks:	W1      1	W11 H8      18	W3 H7      10		
6) Do you agree on or have the same house-keeping standards?	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree W9 H10    19	Occasion-ally W4 H2      6	Almost Always Disagree W2 H3      5	Always Disagree

	Always	Almost Always	Occasion- ally	Almost Never	Never
7) Do either of you feel anxious, guilty, or cheated if you do not complete all your domestic tasks at a certain time or to a certain standard?		W1 H1      2	W9 H8      17	W5 H6      11	
8) Would you like your husband/wife to do more work around the house?	Yes W5 H2      7	No W10 H13    23			