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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.8.1.03>**PUSHING DADDY AWAY? A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MATERNAL GATEKEEPING**

**Abstract** There is a great deal of literature regarding the differences between motherhood and fatherhood. The literature suggests that parenthood is deeply gendered and takes on different meanings for men and for women. This paper examines parenthood from an angle not typically addressed in feminist discussion. Missing from recent scholarship is any in-depth examination of the role that women may play in limiting the involvement of their male partners. What part do women play in the maintenance of traditional parenting roles? This paper, based on a series of interviews with parents of young children as well as field research in child centered locations, concentrates on the reasons behind the emergence of gendered parenting approaches. The qualitative nature of this study makes it possible to note the complexity of this issue and examine the role of both mother and father in gatekeeping. Overall, I argue that many mothers are involved in maternal gatekeeping through taking control over both major and minor parenting decisions, through controlling access to parenting information and through implementing control mechanisms during their absence. I discuss the means by which some mothers attempt to limit their partners' involvement and the ambivalence that this creates for both parents involved.

**Keywords** Maternal Gatekeeping; Gender; Parenting; Paternal Involvement

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The home is clearly the newest battlefield in the struggle for gender equality. When it comes to parenting, however, it often seems that the more things change, the more they stay the same. The literature on gender and childcare is tediously consistent. Women continue to take on the lion's share of childcare duties and this finding remains constant despite women's participation in the paid workforce (Hoch-

schild 1989, 1997; Shelton and John 1996; Coltrane 2000; Sayer 2004; Craig 2006; Poortman and van der Lippe 2009). Furthermore, men tend to view their roles as fathers as mediated by their wives. In fact, men tend to see children as an extension of their marriage and often it is their female partners who decide when to have children and in which way to raise them (Hochschild 1989; di Leonardo 2005; Lorber 2005; Townsend 2005). Even when men are given the opportunity to relocate their paid labor to the domestic realm and increase their childcare activities, this involvement is often viewed as extra and their wives and partners are called on to police these new boundaries (Halford 2006).

There is, of course, evidence of the increased accessibility and involvement of fathers in the lives of their children in the last several decades. There has been a steady increase in the time that men have been spending with their children as well as an increase in the practice of coparenting (Furstenberg 1988; Pleck 1997; Deutsch 1999; Yeung et al. 2001; Turner and Welch 2012). There have also been several notable works that advance gender-neutral parenting, calling for a degendering of this domain and promoting equality in the area of parenting (see, for instance, Kimball 1988; Lorber 2005; Mannino and Deutsch 2007). However, there still remains a large gap between fathers' levels of involvement and those of mothers. Once children are born, they are often viewed to be their mother's priority. Barrett and McIntosh (1982) point out that the fact that women can bear children as well as lactate often leads

to the assumption that all childcare (and by extension, housework) must be carried out by mothers. While they term this, "the tyranny of motherhood" (Barrett and McIntosh 1982:61), other scholars reveal how motherhood becomes a romanticized identity, and mothers tend to feel "morally transformed" (McMahon 1995). Fathers, on the other hand, are often viewed as "helping out" or as "babysitters" when it comes to their own children. They often choose how and how much they will involve themselves with childcare, leaving the burden of responsibility of emotional and physical childcare on the shoulders of mothers (Barrett and McIntosh 1982; LaRossa 1997). Indeed, when a man is the primary care-giver to a child, it is deemed to be an extraordinary situation, sometimes even newsworthy (Lorber 2005). Many scholars point out the inequities inherent in the rigid allocation of traditional parenting roles, pointing out negative outcomes for women in terms of workload in the home and career limitations (see, for example, Williams 2000; Crittenden 2001; Hirshman 2006 among others).

Typically, societal structures, as well as gendered power relations, are held responsible for the endurance of traditional gendered parenting roles. Studies look, quite rightly, to broader social structures to explain the disparity. They concentrate on labor force characteristics, workplace policies, parental leave, relative earnings of men and women, et cetera (see, for instance, Deutsch, Lussier and Servis 1993; Deutsch 1999; Cowan and Cowan 2000; Brandth and Kvande 2009 among others). Other studies explore gen-

der ideologies as the roots of this problem (see Deutsch et al. 1993; Bulanda 2004; Gaunt 2006). Lastly, many studies look to couples' conception of gender roles as well as their everyday negotiations concerning family and work to explain why men are less involved in parenting than women (see Gerson 1985; Thompson 1991; Hochschild 1997 among others).

### Missing: A Deeper Analysis of Gendered Parenting Patterns

Many feminist scholars call on families to begin defining motherhood and fatherhood in the same fashion and, thus, begin the process of degendering parenting (Hooks 1984; Lorber 2005; Wharton 2005). What is missing from recent scholarship is any in-depth examination of the role that women may play in limiting the involvement of their male partners. As a gender scholar I have read study after study explaining what men may have to gain from the unequal distribution of parenting labor in the home. There is, however, a growing body of literature on maternal gatekeeping and on what women may achieve by this practice that is deserving of attention. This study is situated in this growing area of research.

I examine parenthood from an angle not typically addressed in feminist discussion, challenging the assumption that traditional gendered parenting roles are being perpetuated by, and for the overall benefit of fathers. Instead, I address the somewhat controversial question of what both women and men stand to gain or to lose by maintaining traditional parenting ro-

les. While providing fresh insight into the roles that women play in sustaining traditional family gender roles, I call into question ideas of where the knowledge of gender inequality is situated and challenge the perception that women respondents hold the only set of keys to unlocking inquiry on this matter.

The study presented in this paper expands the research in the area of maternal gatekeeping in several ways. To this point, the majority of research carried out in this area has been conducted through the use of survey questionnaires and has been quantitative in nature. This study provides a deeper, more detailed examination and is one of few qualitative studies on maternal gatekeeping to be conducted (other qualitative studies have focused on maternal gatekeeping in families that have experienced parental separation or divorce – see, for instance, Sano, Richards and Zvonkovic 2008; Trinder 2008). It is also one of few studies that does not focus on the psychological characteristics of mothers involved in gatekeeping, but, rather, explores the gatekeeping methods employed by mothers as well as their motivations. Moreover, it is one of the only studies to give voice on this issue to fathers, outlining how they feel when gatekeeping takes place as well as the gains and losses that it provides for men. While previous studies on maternal gatekeeping do not explain the causal direction of this activity making it unclear as to whether gatekeeping is a product of low paternal involvement in parenting or a source of it, this study argues that it is a bit of both. The qualitative nature of this study makes it possible to note the complexity

of this issue and examine the role of both mother and father in gatekeeping.

The findings of this study do not challenge those established in previous research. Rather, they build upon and intensify existing research findings through a thicker and more detailed analysis. Overall, I argue that many mothers are involved in maternal gatekeeping through taking control over both major and minor parenting decisions, through controlling access to parenting information and through implementing control mechanisms during their absence. I discuss the means by which some mothers attempt to limit their partners' involvement and the ambivalence that this creates for both parents involved.

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: MATERNAL GATEKEEPING

Evidence suggests that women generally value the involvement of fathers in their children's upbringing (Pleck 1985; Thompson 1991). Indeed, the positive impact on both children and on the parental unit achieved by paternal involvement with children has been well documented (see Hochschild 1989; Coltrane 1996; Glass 1998; Pleck and Masciadrelli 2004). Still, many women limit the involvement of their children's fathers through behavior that has been termed "maternal gatekeeping." Allen and Hawkins define maternal gatekeeping as, "a collection of beliefs and behaviors that ultimately inhibit a collaborative effort between men and women in family work by limiting men's opportunities for learning and growing through caring for

home and children" (1999:200). While clarifying that maternal gatekeeping is not the primary barrier to father's involvement in childrearing, they suggest that this may be a factor and that over twenty percent of mothers engage in this behavior. Allen and Hawkins (1999) define this behavior as having three dimensions: mother's reluctance to surrender responsibility for family matters by being rigid in their standards, mother's receiving external validation of their identities as mothers, and differentiated conceptions of parental roles.

Cannon, Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Brown and Szewczyk-Sokolowski (2008) posit that maternal gatekeeping may be either facilitative (encouraging paternal involvement and creating opportunities for fathers to gain experience) or inhibitory (behaviors meant to regulate father involvement such as criticizing the father's behavior). Typically, however, the existing research concentrates on this second category, pointing out that gatekeeping limits fathers' opportunities to develop relevant parenting skills and to experience childcare (Allen and Hawkins 1999; Fagan and Barnett 2003; McBride et al. 2005).

Many studies demonstrate the relationship between mothers' beliefs concerning the role of fathers and their gender role identities and gatekeeping (Fagan and Barnett 2003; McBride et al. 2005; Cannon et al. 2008; Gaunt 2008; Schoppe-Sullivan et al. 2008; Kulik and Tsoref 2010). McBride, Brown, Bost, Shin, Vaughn and Korth (2005) found that mothers' feelings concerning the roles of fathers played a role in moderating



the relationship between fathers' perceived investments in parenting and their actual levels of involvement. Fagan and Barnett (2003) operationalized maternal gatekeeping behaviorally, examining the relationships between women's reports of gatekeeping, their perceptions of their children fathers' competence, attitudes concerning the role of fathers and actual father involvement. They found that mothers who placed greater value on the role of fathers also reported that their children's fathers were more involved. Moreover, mothers who viewed their children's fathers as competent parents were less likely to gatekeep. Overall, research points to feelings of ambivalence on the part of mothers towards fathers' increased involvement in parenting and suggests that mothers may, in fact, be unaware that they are engaging in this practice (Gaunt 2008).

Doucet (2009) points out that when women make space for fathers to enter the parenting realm, fathers come to take on responsibility for children both in terms of emotion and community. Doucet (2006) questions the constant comparison of women and men in terms of parenting skills and urges scholars and policy makers alike to note the unique abilities and parenting approaches that fathers bring to their families. She points out that much of the retention of traditional gendered parenting roles stems from the marginalization that fathers often feel in female dominated early childhood settings, such as parenting groups, and notes that women and men experience different pressures when displaying childcare in community settings (Doucet 2006, 2009, 2011).

While not discussing gatekeeping *per se*, Townsend's (2002, 2005) work on fatherhood and the mediating role of women also sheds light on gatekeeping activity. Townsend describes how the men that he studied viewed, "«marriage and children» as elements of a «package deal» which cannot be easily separated" (2005:105). He argues that women are often the decision makers when it comes to having children and that women take on the roles of "default parents." Furthermore, he argues that women play the role of mediator when it comes to fathers' involvement, outlining the conditions that surround fathering behavior. Townsend (2002) argues that men's mediated roles are a result of paid employment and that it is their identity as family providers that is used to express closeness to their children. Indeed, the emphasis placed on provision limits men's time within the home and, thus, men's roles come to be mediated by their wives.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

While the available research on maternal gatekeeping is captivating, it leaves gender scholars hungering for expanded narrative. What, for instance, does maternal gatekeeping look like? How does this behavior take shape? How do fathers feel about gatekeeping and how do they react to it? Moreover, what do both women and men have to gain from gatekeeping behavior and, more importantly, what do they have to lose?

My research adds to the existing literature on parenting by asking what part women may play

in the maintenance of traditional parenting roles. There is a growing discussion, in a society that is moving towards gender neutrality, as to why gender takes such a strong role in shaping parenting. My work contributes to this dialogue, adding to the puzzle, the piece fashioned by the role of mothers.

This study treads uncomfortable waters. The very notion that women engage in gatekeeping activity is, itself, controversial as it removes this behavior from the broader context of the patriarchal family structure. Furthermore, discussion of gatekeeping seems to underestimate the strength of fathers' decisions concerning their own parenting behavior and almost seems to suggest that the gates to paternal involvement are not merely closed, but bolted shut by mothers (see Walker and McGraw [2000] for an excellent example of such criticism). In light of this, it is important to clarify that my research findings are not meant to weaken broader arguments concerning the roles of societal institutions and structures, especially the paid labor market and the male-dominated family structure. It does, however, suggest that mothers sometimes contribute to inequalities in the area of parenting and that women may, indeed, have something to gain from this practice.

## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The bulk of my data was obtained from a series of forty semi-structured interviews with respondents who have young children living in their household. In all cases the mother and father lived together and all but three couples

were married. In most cases, the mother and the father were interviewed separately so that they would feel more comfortable speaking freely about their parenting relationship. Each interview was based on a series of prepared questions pertaining to the respondent's parenting experience. Thus, I explored the same group of central themes with respondents while allowing for flexibility in terms of probing any comments that seem especially interesting. Interviews lasted from between forty-five minutes to over two hours and were transcribed verbatim.

While approximately one quarter of my interviews were conducted in the state of Indiana and several interviews took place in Ohio, the bulk of my data was collected throughout the state of Wisconsin. My findings, then, are typical of the American Midwest. More specifically, research was conducted in an area of the Midwest known for having a high standard of living, high safety ratings, and as being a "good place to raise children." The median age of the research area is in the mid thirties and average household income rests just above sixty thousand dollars. Approximately eighty percent of the population in the area is Caucasian and this was evident in my sample, which was also approximately eighty percent Caucasian. For a list of respondents and their biographical data, see Appendix A. All names used in this article are pseudonyms. [Pseudonyms were chosen with care as to reflect the ethnic origin of respondents' real names. Agbenyaga, for instance, was chosen to reflect the respondent's real name, which is West African in origin while Hilda

was chosen to reflect a name that is Swedish in its origin.]

Using the methodological framework of grounded theory, I was able to generate theory from the data throughout the research process. This approach is valuable as it allows researchers to let their data dictate their findings and, thus, also uncovers what aspects of the research are most significant to their research subjects. It allows respondents to inform, and the researcher to convey the local meaning that respondents create in a situation. This method was especially useful for this study as grounded theory is both detailed and rigorous, yet also permits the flexibility and freedom required to gain new perspectives on common situations. That is, grounded theory allows for layers of analysis that break down assumptions (in this case, the assumption that all patriarchal structures work in a similar fashion) and allow for greater diversity in findings, especially when investigating multifaceted social phenomena (for a more detailed account of grounded theory see Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Charmaz 2006; Bryant 2007 among others). Using open ended questioning was particularly constructive for my research as it facilitated the kind of flexibility that allowed my respondents to concentrate on the aspects of parenting that they found most meaningful, thus giving my subjects voice in my research. Often, respondents' comments led me to add extra questions in subsequent interviews, often taking me down unexpected paths. For instance, I did not initially ask parents about having travelled with and without their children and the planning

that often accompanied these trips. Responses from early respondents caused me to add these questions, which proved to hold an abundance of data relevant to the topic of gatekeeping.

I used a snowball sampling technique to carry out this research. This technique consists of gathering informants who, after the interview, refer you to other informants. Qualitative research of this nature typically consists of a number of small snowball groups. Several interviews were carried out by research assistants under my supervision. Initial respondents were obtained while observing parenting *in situ* at places where parents and children can be found, including parks, child-themed cafes, libraries and restaurants. I would simply approach strangers in these settings, introduce myself, obtain their phone numbers, and then set up an appointment for an interview at a later date. While this sampling technique was non-random and purposive, it allowed me to explore the narratives of my respondents in rich detail. In general, this approach yielded a relatively diverse sample, consisting of several different religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. The sample also consisted of families that were formed by adoption and step-parenting. It did not, unfortunately, result in a sample that was diverse in terms of sexual orientation and this is a limitation of my study.

Typically, parents were very eager to speak about their parenting roles and rejections were few and far between. On several occasions, women respondents explained that they would be happy to be interviewed, but that their husbands

or live-in boyfriends were very busy and would most likely refuse. Indeed, this was the case with two respondents who were interviewed without their partners included in the sample. However, it was more often the case that, once the male partner was asked, he agreed to the interview and often spent longer speaking than his female counterpart. In general, respondents mentioned that they felt special to be included in a study of an academic nature as, for them, this was an exceptional experience.

Once complete, my data was openly coded for analysis using codes such as: BP (baby preparation), U@N (up at night), BT (bedtime), PT (play time), G (gain), R (rigidity), COD (control over decision), COI (control over information), as well as others. I then organized relationships between the codes used, combining them into common themes. Thus, concepts became categories of analysis. Once this conceptualizing was complete, I began my second coding (axial coding) of the material, recoding the data according to the properties and dimensions of the categories and subcategories that I had formed. I completed my data analysis with a third, selective coding, creating substantive theory from the categories of axial codes. At this point in analysis the core narrative of my research emerged and I began answering the broader questions of how women limit their male partner's parenting, how men respond to this and what women have to gain from maternal gatekeeping.

## FINDINGS

In the following sections I outline how a number of mothers partake in maternal gatekeeping

through asserting control over both major and minor parenting decisions. Gatekeeping behavior also takes shape through the assertion of control over parenting information and by controlling the home environment even during absence. Several of my respondents engaged in archetypal gatekeeping behavior by limiting the involvement of their male partners. These behaviors are fraught with both gains and losses for both mothers and fathers and, thus, create a sense of ambivalence in parents as they simultaneously accept and reject gatekeeping activity.

### Control over Decisions

Maternal gatekeeping is, in itself, an instrument of control that women sometimes use to assert influence in the domestic domain. Many of my women respondents explained to me that they prefer to have control over the majority of parenting decisions. These decisions varied from minor decisions such as what color to paint the nursery, which baby furniture to buy and which hobbies their children would adopt to more major decisions such as what day care their child would attend, what their children's diet should consist of and what type of parenting style would be adopted. Thus, mothers actively managed their children's upbringing and, by extension, their male partners' parenting styles and choices. Women often addressed this taking control over decisions outright. Victoria, a professor with two young children who refers to herself as a "control person," explained:

I plan everything. I do all the doctors' appointments. I schedule haircuts. I schedule their pictures. You know, I pay the sitters. I pay the pre-



school. I make the schedule for year...I'm kind of managing their lives a lot more than he probably does... I think, it's not even a, "Oh, my husband doesn't do anything," it's just a, "This is just what I did"...those are just the things that I chose to take over.

It is interesting to note that Victoria goes out of her way to explain that this "taking over" was her doing and not necessarily a result of her husband's reluctance to fill this role. Sharon, a mother of two, echoes this sentiment when speaking about making preparations for a family trip, explaining: "Yeah, I do all the work...I've never even thought of letting Tod do it or even asking him to do it." Indeed, many women limited their partners' involvement with their children by taking on tasks and making decisions as if their partner's roles as parents were non-existent. That is, decisions were made without soliciting input from fathers whatsoever. While most fathers did not actively fight their partners' managing decisions, they often expressed regret for having conceded control over this domain. For instance, Mathew, a currently unemployed stay-at-home father, during a discussion over potty training decisions, is asked: "How did you come up with that idea?" His answer: "She did. I won't ever do that again."

Often control over decisions was taken more forcefully. Mathew reports being, "yelled at" when he makes decisions that differ from his partner's. Amber, a graduate student with a toddler at home, does not go so far as to yell when her boyfriend disagrees with her, but tells me that her boyfriend often jokes that she's

"the boss" and explains that she often controls both insignificant elements of her family's life (such as "dragging" her boyfriend to have a family picture taken) as well as several important elements. For instance, her boyfriend did not want their son to attend daycare; he preferred him to stay at home with him. Amber, however, made clear during her interview that she did not want her boyfriend to take on the role of a stay-at-home father. When speaking about the daycare that her son used to attend she says: "but he [her boyfriend] was not fond of the daycare; it was more like I forced him to be okay with it..." Her boyfriend, Hector, admits to giving in when a disagreement over their son arises, "I won't say nothing even though I probably won't agree..." In fact, when I ask how they come to a decision over how to do things, he interrupts the question and inserts, "she's right... When she wants me to do it a certain way, then I have to do it a certain way."

Many women expressed their control more subtly, by answering questions concerning childcare decisions with the word "I" (as in "I wanted," "the approach I want to take" or "I picked," etc.). This was often mirrored by their male partners' statements (such as: "we painted the room the colors that she wanted," "she was really picky about..."). Sometimes mothers were less subtle in their control over decisions. Wendy, a mother of two young children, expressed: "But, I think my role falls into the decision making and his role falls into 'I do what she says'..." In a more extreme case, Mathew explained how decisions concerning his son's clothing are made:

M: Um, today Maria picked his clothes out. She doesn't like how I dress him...sometimes I just put some clothes on him in the morning and then Maria goes, "Hey, I don't want that on my son!"

Interviewer: What happens then?

M: She takes off his clothes and puts something else on.

It makes a great deal of sense that women would attempt to control elements of the domestic realm. Increased paternal involvement in decision making intrudes on an area that has historically been a source of power for women. Moreover, regardless of actual distribution of work in the home, women continue to be viewed as those responsible for care of and decisions surrounding their children. This places a great deal of pressure on women who often feel judged by the condition of their homes and children, a judgment from which their male partners seem to be exempt. Women in my sample were very much aware of this. Mary, a mother of two children under the age of two, makes comments that express this connection well when she blends her identity of being a caretaker to her children and husband with the impression that she feels that she makes when her home is not perfect:

Like, I love being a wife and caretaker and people come to my house and it's messy and I feel that reflects on me, it doesn't reflect on Steve. And so I put pressure on myself that way.

Because women are so often associated with childcare and housework, failure to make a good impression in these areas does not sim-

ply reflect on mothers as individuals, but has a large impact on their sense of self-worth as women. This connection between feminine identity and childcare may provide insight as to why many women feel that the weight of childcare responsibility is theirs alone. Indeed, many of my women respondents seemed to be thrown into the role of decision maker during pregnancy (with registering for baby showers, which for all of my respondents that had them, centered around the mother) and even before pregnancy. The largest, and most powerful decision to be made surrounding children is whether or not to have any. This was not lost on my respondents, many of whom made it clear that this was an area in which they would have the final say:

[When asked about having more children] No! No, it is not in my plans. Apparently it is in Jim's and my daughter's plans... (Wendy)

[It is interesting to note here that her husband's decision making power in this area is equated with that of her daughter.]

Then the problem came into how many and I only wanted two more tops and he could go forever, he could have a dozen and he'd be happy... (Tina)

And, I've always wanted one and Tod's always not. And finally it came, I want one, he doesn't. I wanted it more. (Sharon)

She stopped taking her birth control is what it was. I mean, it wasn't something we decided on or anything. I don't know why she did it. (Tod – talking about his first wife, not Sharon)

She [wants more]. I just do whatever she says, but otherwise I'm OK with just the one, but she wants more. (Hector)

[He did not want more children, but] I was on my own plan, I got pregnant. (Kaitlin – met during field research)

I told Maria – I said, "I want like 15 more." She like, "It ain't going to happen." If I could, I would. (Mathew)

It is both noteworthy as well as heartening to see that the women in my study had a strong sense of control when it came to decisions concerning their own bodies, a human rights issue that women have been tackling for years. Nevertheless, controlling major decisions surrounding pregnancy discounts the feelings of their partners. This flows over even into cases where the pregnancy is unplanned as women seem to control the "feeling environment" concerning the pregnancy. In the case of John and Tanya, for example, Tanya reported that she had been "freaking out" about her unplanned pregnancy, while John states:

...I was thrilled, but she didn't know it (laughs) until it was OK for her to be happy about it... I knew better than to go: "Oh, this is a good thing" when she's freaking out.

It seems clear that feelings and decisions surrounding pregnancy fall into the women's domain. It is not surprising then that feelings and decisions surrounding childcare would also come to be seen as the women's domain. Indeed, in most cases, the respondents who reported making solo decisions concerning pregnan-

cy, were more likely to control other decisions concerning their children's upbringing as well.

### Control Over Information

Linked to control over parenting decisions, many of my respondent mothers reported that they took steps to control the information that their partners received concerning their child's routine, health and care. This control often began as early as pregnancy – as women began to gather information on their changing bodies. Far more women respondents read books on pregnancy than male respondents and when both parents were engaged in research, the mother often did more reading. Several women reported selectively sharing information with the father, telling him only the parts that they felt would interest him or that he should find important. Maria, for instance, told me: "mostly, I just did all the reading and dictated to him [a filtered version of] what I read." This pre-parent information was not limited to couples that conceived naturally. When Reuben and Katie decided to adopt children (after having had two children through pregnancy), it was Katie who read and researched on both the adoption procedure and the issues concerning raising children who have been adopted. She then shared with Reuben only the parts that she felt he needed to know.

It is important to note that controlling information is not something that is done purposefully by mothers, but, rather, is an extension of controlling decisions and speaks to a lack of communication between parents. That is, wo-

men in my sample reported that they did not intentionally hide information from their children's fathers, but they did choose not to share information with them for various reasons including a belief that holding this information was part of a mother's realm, a belief that this information should come naturally to a parent, or simply the source of pride that holding limited information awards. Victoria articulates this important point well when she reports:

I would leave the house and he would call me, "What does this kid want? Why is he crying? Where is his food? What do you feed him?" And I was like, "Seriously, you don't know what he eats?" Well he probably wouldn't because I just do it without explaining what I'm doing...

Victoria later adds that she feels that her husband "would be completely lost if he had to figure out" all of the things that her children need to have done for them. At the same time, the above quote illustrates how she understands that she has never shared this information with him. Controlling his access to information, then, creates in her husband a sense of dependence on her when it comes to carrying out basic parenting tasks. This is very much in line with Allen and Hawkins definition of maternal gatekeeping as, "a collection of beliefs and behaviors that ultimately inhibit a collaborative effort between men and women in family work by limiting men's opportunities for learning and growing through caring for home and children" (1999:200).

Sharon makes similar statements to Victoria when she discussed Tod's role in choosing a daycare:

And I think it's probably not that he doesn't care, it's probably that he's never went and seen it to know that there's a difference... I'm guessing he's probably just thinking, "You know, a daycare's a daycare."

In general, women reported that they were more in tune with their children's needs than their partners and that they were more on top of their children's medical information because they were the ones to take their children to the doctor. This was often a result of simply being the primary parent and is not surprising in light of the findings of most parenting research. However, women's reluctance to take the extra step of sharing information with their partners is puzzling. In doing so, they set themselves up as the only people capable of administering medicines and taking care of their children's health care needs. This, of course, awards mothers a great deal of power and a real sense of indispensability. At the same time, women often reported feeling ambivalent about their roles as information custodians. On one hand, they gained pride from having exclusive knowledge and, yet, they felt overwhelmed by the responsibility that this entails. This will be discussed further in subsequent sections.

### Control When Away

Surprisingly, maternal gatekeeping is not limited to periods when mothers are at home. Many mothers in my sample explained that



when they went away overnight they would leave ready made meals and ensure that there were enough clothes, diapers, et cetera for their children. Agbenyaga, a homemaker with a two year old at home, explained that before leaving overnight she would make, “sure her [daughter’s] laundries were made (sic!) and...[go] grocery shopping for her food, drinks. Even though, daddy is around I still make sure that she has enough of that, and diapers...” Mary, a mother of two, explains how she prepared for an overnight trip by planning meals and providing instructions for her husband:

I planned two meals that they – that he could make. I went grocery shopping and got all the ingredients and set the recipe cards out for him... normally I would have made it, but I decided to go last minute, I think. So, I didn’t have time to make it... I knew they’d have a great time. I did worry if she – I made a comment to him like, “If she pees by her diaper, change the sheets. Don’t just be like ‘it will be dry by nap time’...”

While research on maternal gatekeeping suggests that mothers who engage in the practice are more likely to have little faith in their partner’s parenting ability, both Mary and Agbenyaga expressed that they had a great deal of trust in their husbands. The extra planning work that they take upon themselves before leaving seems to be more about control and, also, simply being in the habit of doing this work. On the other hand, many women (including Agbenyaga) reported that when they left for an overnight trip, they would leave their children with their mothers or their mothers-in-law, thereby placing their children under the supervision

of another woman rather than leaving them with their fathers. This suggests that women’s faith in their partner’s parenting abilities may be more limited than they are willing to admit and that they feel more secure having another woman carry out the tasks that society has allocated as a female domain.

Most surprising, was the discovery that many of my women respondents who worked outside the home and had an opportunity to leave their children with their partners (who had a day off from their jobs, had flexible work schedules that allowed them to be home with their children or who were unemployed and acting as primary caregivers) would use the morning hours or the night before as a means of controlling the time their partners spent during the day alone with their children. That is, they would spend time preparing for their partner’s day. The most extreme example of this can be found in the case of Ashley who would spend half an hour every morning getting the house ready for her partner Robert. During this time she would prepare sippy cups for her son, filling them with milk and placing them in the fridge, prepare food for her son that day, turn on the TV for them – ready for when they wake up, go through the house and place specific toys in places where she knew her son would find them and play with them, et cetera. She would then let Robert know that he was “on duty” and leave for work. Amazingly, Robert seemed, during his interview, to be completely oblivious to all of the work that Ashley carried out. Moreover, Ashley did not seem to recognize that she was micro-managing her partner’s day by doing work that is ty-

pically considered the responsibility of a child’s immediate care-taker.

While Ashley’s example may be excessive, less extreme examples of this managing a partner’s parenting during absence abound. Both men and women reported that mothers would often engage in preparations for childcare the night before, readying clothes and preparing food. Several women reported making requests or lists for their partners to carry out with their children such as specifying the activities that fathers were to engage in with their children for the day. For instance, women would often arrange fathers’ schedules with their children, detailing how much time should be spent outdoors, how much time spent watching television, et cetera. Often women would stipulate how certain parenting tasks should be carried out during their absence. Explicit instructions were often given surrounding what to feed children and how to put them to bed (or, often, what methods of putting them to bed were unacceptable). Some mothers even indicated what toys were to be played with (with emphasis typically placed on educational toys). Diaper bags provide an especially significant example. Several men reported that they had never filled a diaper bag. Hector, a stay-at-home father with one child, explained that his child’s diaper bag is always full and ready to go. Indeed, he jokingly referred to this as well as other housework that his partner would do, as part of his “magic stuff,” which always stays clean and ready for use.

It is difficult to access the reasoning behind mothers carrying out the work of managing childcare during their absence. While they report having trust in the fathers of their children, they make it clear that they are not always willing to hand over complete control of this domain. One possible explanation rests on the fact that leaving children with fathers compromises the power that women hold in the family. After all, if fathers can do alright without mothers’ help, what distinctive contributions to family life can mothers lay claim to? This is an important question as, all too often, the power that awaits women who work or volunteer outside the home does not offer an adequate power alternative. What is clear is that the work of maintaining parental influence when absent takes time and effort, a fact which many of my respondents found problematic. This, again, speaks to the ambivalence that women feel over maternal gatekeeping behavior.

### Limiting Paternal Involvement

The most basic form of maternal gatekeeping, limiting fathers’ involvement, took a central role for some of the couples in my sample. For some women this behavior was not understated, nor was it articulated subtly during their interviews. Sharon, for instance, expressed early in the interview that she functions as a “single parent” and that Tod only “fills in” when he can. Tod’s comments mirror Sharon’s, yet illuminate his feeling that he has very little control over the amount of his involvement with his children:

I never had to do anything. I didn't have a choice. It wasn't that I didn't want to do the stuff, it was that she got up in the morning, got Anita clothed and took her to her mother's or grandpa's and that was just the way it was. If I actually said, "Well, I really don't have a lot going on today, leave her home with me, we'll go to the parks and play" she'd say, "No, she's going to grandma's and grandpa's." And that's the way it was and then, finally, I was like, "OK, I won't even ask." So, then it was like, "Do what you want with her, I guess I've got no say."

David, tells a similar story:

It was really, actually weird because I had a lot of experience with children so I did everything – well, not everything, but I did a lot of stuff and tried to help her, but then, after a couple of weeks, it was opposite. She did everything.

When asked to explain how this division of parenting labor came about, David responds with confusion, at first saying, "She was – I don't know" and then going back and forth between talking about his prior experience with children, her ability to lactate, and his work commitments. His wife, Hilda, interviewed earlier, mentions that David was once a better caretaker than her, but quickly explains that she has taken over this domain due to women's maternal advantage. In fact, while David reported that they were both equally good at parenting tasks, Hilda reported: "I just feel that I'm almost better at everything." When David is asked for a second time how the "switch" in roles came about, David continues talking in circles and then finally tells me:

To me, I felt that she was really nervous when I brought him home, which is my own perspective, and I just kind of helped her out – showed her the diapers, cleaning the umbilical cord and stuff like that. And I might be blowing it out of proportion because I'm a guy and that's what we do, but it just seemed to – I was doing a little bit more and, then, now not as much. It has kind of reversed... And, it's not because I don't want to help her, it's just, you know, trying to find that medium so I can concentrate on other things...but, yet still be part of the family and enjoy things.

It is remarkable that David simply cannot explain why he went from principal caregiver to secondary caregiver. The manner in which he ends his explanation, however, is telling. One must wonder why he feels that he needs to find a way to be part of the family now, when at the time of the baby's arrival, this was not a concern. Indeed, the mothers in my sample who employed maternal gatekeeping, whether obvious or subtle, did not seem to understand that their partners felt limited by these behaviors and, often, felt pushed out of their fathering roles. Many couples told me about times that the mother had to leave the house for one reason or another feeling that the father would have a hard time alone with their child. This sense of indispensability was shattered, however, when they would come home to find that the father did quite well on his own. Fathers were quick to communicate the feelings of joy that they had concerning these times alone with their children. For example, Jerry, the father of a one year old, told me that he had some trouble connecting with his daughter when

his wife was home as the baby always went to her mother for things first, but, "when mom's not around, she's my girl!" Interestingly, Ruth, a nurse and mother of two, explained to me how she resisted the temptation to gatekeep so as not to create a family environment in which her spouse would feel like a secondary parent. She told me:

I think with my first I was a bit, "It's my way, it's my way." But, then you realize that if you do that, you kind of push the other [parent] to the side... It's always you making sure everything's done and...once you let that go you realize, "Oh, he's fine."

In general, women respondents, as well as those met during field research, tended to make comments concerning their partners' inattentiveness to their children's needs. One woman, for instance, told me that she never left her child alone with her husband because he "doesn't hear" the baby monitor. However, not all of the couples in my sample that were involved with limiting fathers' involvement were concerned with safety/needs issues. Rather, the limitation seemed to stem from differing parenting styles. Hector's comments provide an especially good example:

...if I had a choice, I'd rather be with him then not with him on the days that she's gone. I tell her all the time, "You can leave whenever you want – go vacation with your mom somewhere..." She says, "No, I don't want to, you just want to keep Juan," you know, and she's like, "You play with him too much..."

In general, the men in my sample tended to take a more "laid back" approach to parenting (such as we see with Hector who preferred to play with his toddler instead of teaching him things). This makes sense when we consider that men do not place a great deal of their identity on their roles as fathers and may not be attempting to be "superdads." At the same time, I found that the men in my sample were more lenient concerning things such as bed-time (letting their children fall asleep on them rather than in their beds), meal time (for instance, not insisting on only organic food or being less strict with meal timing and nutrition), and play time (allowing their children to take more risks, to play for longer periods, and to watch more television than mothers would like). These things were often viewed by mothers as lesser parenting practices and in need of limitation whereas fathers did not view things in this manner. They simply explained to me that their parenting priorities lay elsewhere.

The most obvious limiting of paternal involvement stems from the choices made by couples concerning men carrying out more work outside the home. While it would be absurd to downplay the role of sexism and economic inequality in the paid labor market as driving forces behind such family decisions, the comments that several of my respondents made about their thoughts on these roles are telling. When asked about the possibility of "switching roles" many women responded that their husbands would be fine with this, but that they would not be. Klara, for instance, mentions economic factors



as weighing in her decision to be the stay-at-home parent, but quickly also clarifies:

Oh, I think he'd be willing to...but it was always my dream to stay home with the kids...my dream that I would be there for the first steps or the first word, first wave, first smile, you know?

Several husbands' comments mirror these sentiments. Adam, for example, when asked how the decision was made for Ruth to stay home, answers: "Well, she wanted to. And, I...made more money than her...but mainly she really desired to do that so..." Maria, whose husband is currently unemployed and on disability, told me:

...I don't have as much time [with my son] cause he wants to be with his daddy. I don't know – I would prefer him to go back to work, that'd be great. I just miss being home with my kid without him.

While Maria shares that she'd like her husband to return to work so that she can spend more alone time with her child, the desire for fathers to curb their at home time with their children was not limited to women who worked only within the home. Ashley, for instance, states that she'd prefer Robert not to stay home with her son because daycare would be good in developing her son's social skills. At the same time she explains that if she could stay home, she would. Amber does not wish to stay home with her son, but did insist on her son going to daycare (until they could no longer afford it). She tells me outright that she does not want her boyfriend to be a full-time homemaker while clarifying:

"my boyfriend wishes that he could just stay home and take care of him..." Sharon, as well, is very straightforward in her explanation of how she and Tod chose their work roles:

He says that all the time, "You go to work and make the money and then I'll do the..."...And I'm just like, "No, no, how would I ever...that's why you make the big money and I don't, because when I want to just leave for a day, I can. If it's nice out and I want to go pick my kids up, I can. If she's got a Christmas concert, you know, and it's during the day, yep, I have to leave [work] at noon today." OK. So, it's like my trade-off.

Sharon, thus, limits her partner's involvement with her children in order to afford herself a more flexible work schedule, assuring that she will never need to limit her own involvement with her children. This model, which limits fatherhood in order to allow women to pursue involved motherhood is by no means novel. Indeed, it is rooted in the long standing cult of domesticity. My respondents simply modify the model, sewing in patches of female paid labor to give a modern look to a notion that is no longer fashionable as is.

### **Gain, Loss and Ambivalence**

Both mothers and fathers involved in maternal gatekeeping seemed to simultaneously accept and reject this practice and, in fact, tended to feel a sense of ambivalence towards it that suggested that it provides both gains and losses. As previously mentioned, the research on maternal gatekeeping does not clarify the causal direction of this activity. Is gatekeeping the so-

urce of lower paternal involvement, or is it, actually, a product of fathers' low involvement to begin with? My research suggests that the causality flows both ways, and that gatekeeping is both the source of and the product of low levels of paternal involvement at the same time. In order to better understand this assertion, we must first explore what both women and men have to gain and to lose from maternal gatekeeping.

### **Gain**

Among the positive features of maternal gatekeeping for women is the sense of indispensability that it creates. This was often suggested by some of the first comments that women made during interviews. For example, when I asked Sharon if she minded being interviewed she responded by telling me, "I run the show." Ashley explained to me that after the birth of their child she was scared because she didn't know how Robert, "was going to make it through the month" and added that she'd, "never seen him so stressed out before." This is noteworthy considering that Robert reported that it, "wasn't as difficult as...[he] thought it would be" and that the first month after the baby's arrival went, "amazingly smoothly." Women often reported that their male partners were simply not as good at parenting as they were and men often reiterated this view. Often, respondents would link this to the young ages of their children telling me that the child simply needs his/her mother more at this point yet they failed to provide evidence to back up this contention.

Some women indicated that they gained a sense of domestic power through gatekeeping behavior and many attempted to rationalize this by suggesting that they simply had controlling personalities. Maria, for instance, told me that she had a, "dominating personality," and then continued to explain that she desired to keep the current division of parenting labor as it is because her son may not need her as much in the future. She explains how she feels when her son chooses her over his father: "part of my heart breaks when he says, 'I want my mommy' and the other part of me is going, 'Ha ha!'" Sharon's comments are quite similar as she explains that she cannot bring herself to give up the power that being the primary parent brings in terms of her maternal identity:

I love being a mom. So, I don't mind doing it all. Like doctor's appointments, I couldn't imagine not going. I couldn't, "You take her and you tell me what they said"...It's just the control issue in me.

For some women, the power gained from being the essential parent compensated for power lost after childbirth. This was most evident in respondents who cut down on hours or quit their jobs in the paid work force. However, it sometimes extended to other realms of women's identity. Samantha, for instance, shared that her husband was distant and unhappy after her son was born and seemed upset that they could not have sex for a long period of time after the birth (which involved complications). She seemed to use her indispensability as the care-giver of his child (and the child's major food

source) as a way of restoring the security that she once felt in her marriage.

### Loss

Maternal gatekeeping also seems to be fraught with loss. The most significant loss for mothers was undoubtedly the loss of time and energy that carrying out the majority of parenting work entails. Every mother respondent who limited her partner's involvement (even if only to a small degree) expressed a sincere desire for help with childcare and a feeling of being overwhelmed with parenting responsibilities. At the same time, they were keenly aware of the contradiction between their chosen parenting roles and their feelings of exhaustion. Respondents expressed this incongruity themselves:

So, it's not always balanced in a way where I would like, but I do feel that, um, you know, at the same time I have the role that I want. (Wendy)

I would like to say that I'm not gender biased... I would like to say that, but...I chose to be, you know, an active attachment stay-at-home parent... (Wendy)

I think I'm more controlling. So, I'm OK with it, but at the same time I need more help. (Sharon)

...so, I'll give him [my husband] six hours on Sunday to work by himself. Well, I've got...work coming out of my ears and no time to do it in... I would love two hours...if I don't ask for it I don't get it and because I haven't asked for it, I don't get it... (Victoria)

It seems, then, that mothers' choices to limit their partners' involvement with childcare are

akin to, "shooting themselves in the foot." The only way in which to reduce their work overload is to open the gate for their partners. At the same time, doing this lessens their sense of control and power in this domain. For maternal gatekeepers, this is too high a price to pay for a little rest.

While fathers clearly gain from maternal gatekeeping in terms of personal time for leisure and/or career advancement, fathers also expressed a sense of loss from maternal gatekeeping. Many men reported that they wished that they had the same type of bond with their child as their partners had and they often felt confused as to how to go about attaining this without upsetting their partner. Moreover, many fathers expressed that they actively sought ways to establish a sense of belonging in their changing families. Fathers often felt lost as to what exactly their role with their children should be (a concern that was never expressed by mothers). This sometimes led to their feeling left out and in a few cases even led to feelings of unease with family life or resentment.

### Ambivalence

While it seems clear that maternal gatekeepers are hurting themselves and their partners when they limit fathers' activities, the roots of their behaviors are complex. Several fathers who reported that their partners' engaged in gatekeeping activity felt ambiguous concerning this practice. Sometimes, for instance, men would ask their partners to leave instructions or lists for them concerning childcare or they would

call their partners on the phone for parenting advice. Women sometimes reported that their partners expressed a lack of patience for particular parts of parenting (such as dealing with crying, illness and tantrums) and were relieved at the opportunity to hand authority over to mothers. In some cases men relied on mothers to do infant childcare, setting patterns that were not easily broken. In one extreme case, Tod, who made many comments concerning how he felt pushed out of his children's lives, mentions that he and his partner have had difficulties in the past, but neglects to explain that they were actually separated for a year after the birth of their first child. During this time, his partner Sharon explains that parental role patterns became set. And so, when asked how it came to be that she did most of the parenting work Sharon answers:

Because we didn't plan to have a kid, it was just something that happened and he was more, "I wanna do what I wanna do and not revolve my life around a child." So, when I was, "Oh yeah, here's a kid and I'll revolve my life around this child"...Because I accepted it I guess.

While this example is extreme, men's ambiguity towards their partners' gatekeeping is significant. While Tod's feelings towards his children certainly changed when he returned to the family and he reported, "butting heads" with Sharon over gatekeeping issues, he still seemed relatively unbothered by the fact that Sharon carried out the overwhelming majority of parenting work and decision making. He made comments such as, "well, when it comes

to the kids, I let her do what she wants." This is typical of many of the men in my sample who seemed to simply accept their wives as default parents and were not particularly bothered by gatekeeping activity. Molly's husband, Tom, for example, tells me:

T: She's the boss of the house. I mean, she's the one that takes care of everything, so...and that's OK with me.

Interviewer: How did she come to be the boss of the house?

T: I think she just took it one day. I don't know (laughs). I don't really want it, so I'll let her have it, you know.

Interviewer: Was it the same even when you were single [and a stay-at-home father]?

T: Well, until she got home from work and then she was the boss...when mommy's around, mommy's the boss.

Hector makes similar comments:

Don't argue with your mom, your mom is right. So, I do the same things that she does when she's there. But, when she's not there, I do it the way I want to [do] it.

This attitude from fathers is not surprising considering that men have been socialized to feel that women know best when it comes to parenting. Hector, for instance, makes it clear that he believes that Amber's parenting style is better informed than his own:

Even, like, no matter how much I disagree, if it's going to make him better, I'll hold my tongue, you know?



...when she wants something done a certain way, there's no arguing. There's no arguing, we just do it. You know, she's like, "Put him to bed – put him to bed the right way." I'm like, "OK, I will..." And I – I put him to bed the right way.

Comments, such as Hector's, concerning women's superior knowledge when it comes to child-care were peppered throughout the majority of my interviews. However, men also seemed not to be extremely bothered by maternal gatekeeping because they did not base their personal identities on parenting behavior. While women made comment after comment about their conceptions of the role of mothers and how they perceive themselves in this role<sup>1</sup>, fathers mostly spoke of their parenting roles as one component of their overall identity and, often, as linked to their work outside the home. It is, thus, completely reasonable for them to not feel threatened by their partner's gatekeeping activity.

In general, fathers who cared to be involved with their children's upbringing, but faced maternal gatekeeping activity viewed it as a trade-off for either lessened responsibility when it came to the rougher parts of parenting or, sometimes, for being allowed into the formerly female domain of childcare. This is best put by Hector who understands that his partner feels the loss of power associated with control over the home.

<sup>1</sup> There is a large body of literature that deals with maternal identity (before pregnancy, during, and after) and the link between maternal identity and gatekeeping is well documented. For more see Rubin (1967); Mercer (1995); Gaunt (2008); Loftus and Namaste (2011). My own data concerning maternal and paternal identities is rich, yet beyond the scope of this paper.

When I had a full-time job I wanted it like caveman days. I'd come home and there better be dinner, everything better be clean. And then now, since we had him, I kind of did a 180. "I'll stay home. I'll clean. I'll cook for you. As long as I can just stay home with him...I'll do whatever you want..." So, ever since he was born I want to switch roles, but she still wants control. And that's fine...

Hector's comment exemplifies the feelings that many of my father respondents had concerning maternal gatekeeping. They seemed to view this activity as a normal part of parenting relations. They felt pushed outside and, at the same time, were thankful for the fresh air. Maternal gatekeeping seems to be viewed as both a blessing and a curse, allowing for more personal freedom and less work while restricting the benefits that this work awards.

## CONCLUSION

This research challenges general discourse concerning fairness of gendered work in the home. Typically, dialogue on equality and fairness is limited to discussion concerning who is subject to the greater work load and who is burdened by childcare responsibility. This analysis suggests that it would be important in our quest for equality to also consider the benefits and rewards that accompany a greater workload and responsibility. Equality involves both give and take and while maternal gatekeepers are giving in terms of workload, they are not giving in terms of work benefits. Maternal gatekeepers, metaphorically, keep their male partners unemployed in the home.

The data illustrates that women partake in maternal gatekeeping by asserting control over parenting decisions and over information concerning their children. Gatekeeping also takes the form of controlling parenting activity when one is away from the home. In many cases, gatekeeping activity restricts the involvement of fathers with their own children. Understanding how this activity takes shape is essential as society moves toward greater gender equality.

Secondly, this research draws attention to the complexity of the issue of maternal gatekeeping, pointing out that while men have much to lose from the practice, they sometimes fashion their partner's behavior themselves by displaying reluctance to participate in some of the less rewarding and more demanding tasks of parenting and by conceding authority to their partners. Indeed, both parents involved with gatekeeping behavior feel a sense of ambivalence towards it and accept and reject it simultaneously. Thus, the direction of the behavior is circular and reinforces itself.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to mention that another source of maternal gatekeeping comes in the form of rituals surrounding breastfeeding, including co-sleeping with children in a manner that requires fathers to sleep in separate beds (and for some of my respondents even separate rooms), joining organizations and clubs, which systematically exclude fathers such as La Leche League International and the Holistic Moms Network (both of which do not officially exclude men, but are clearly not designed to include

them, a detail which was not lost on my male respondents whose partners were members), and by using breastfeeding as a primary source of bonding well into toddlerhood. The link between breastfeeding and possible maternal gatekeeping is a matter of interest and calls for further research and analysis.

Other directions that future research may take include an examination of maternal gatekeeping among separated couples, same sex couples and teenaged couples. Several respondents hinted that behavior outside the home is rather different than that inside the home, which calls for an examination of maternal gatekeeping in both public and private spheres. Most importantly, the link between maternal gatekeeping and both maternal and paternal identity is well documented in the literature and deserves the benefit of a qualitative analysis. There is surely a great deal more to contribute to this growing field of investigation.

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## APPENDIX A: RESPONDENTS

#	Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	# kids	age kids	Years Together	Ethnicity/Religion	int length	int place	int State	# of Partner	Married?
1	Daniel	35	Campus Crusade for Christ	2	2,4	11	none	30	university	WI	#2	y
2	Heather	34	Campus Crusade for Christ	2	2,4	11	Christian	35	friend's home	WI	#1	y
3	Jim	32	phlebotomist	2	2,5	10	Pagan	50	res home	WI	#4	y
4	Wendy	33	homemaker	2	2,5	10	Pagan	65	res home	WI	#3	y
5	Steve	27	Campus Crusade for Christ	2	1,2	4	Christian	50	university	WI	#6	y
6	Mary	30	Campus Crusade for Christ	2	1,2	4	Christian	60	res home	WI	#5	y
7	Mathew	29	unemployed (disability)	1	2	6	Christian	90	public library	WI	#3	y
8	Maria	27	student	1	2	6	Christian	90	Starbucks	WI	#7	y
9	Hector	24	odd jobs (stay at home)	1	1	4	Mexican	60	Starbucks	WI	#10	n
10	Amber	24	grad student	1	1	5	Catholic	55	Starbucks	WI	#9	n
11	Hilda	25	teacher	1	under 1	almost 2	Christian/part Swedish	70	Starbucks	WI	#12	y
12	David	27	project manager/MBA student	1	under 1	almost 2	Catholic	60	Starbucks	WI	#11	y
13	Robert	37	stage-hand (often home - night work)	1	2	12	Irish	75	Café	WI	#14	n
14	Ashley	32	bookstore	1	2	12	none	60	Café	WI	#13	n
15	Ruth	32	nurse/paramedic	2	1,3	6	Lutheran	60	Café	WI	#16	y
16	Richard	33	fireman	2	1,3	6	Lutheran	30	Café	WI	#15	y
17	Henry	40	military	2	under1, 10	17	Lutheran	45	res home	WI	#18	y
18	Klara	36	homemaker/bank	2	under1, 10	17	Lutheran/German	60	res home	WI	#17	y
19	Reuben	33	engineer	5	1,1,1,5,7	10	Christian	60	res home	IN	#20	y
20	Katie	33	long-time grad student/homemaker	5	1,1,1,5,7	10	Christian	65	res home	IN	#19	y
21	Molly	27	student	2	1,3	3	Catholic but not anymore	65	Barnes+Nob	IN	#22	y
22	Tom	30	unemployed/odd jobs	2	1,3	3	none	80	Barnes+Nob	IN	#21	y
23	Agbenyaga	40	homemaker	1	2	4	West African/Christian	45	park	IN	not in sample	y
24	Victoria	30	professor	2	1,4	6	Italian	45	res work	WI	not in sample	y
25	Ruth	31	homemaker	1	2	4	Pentecostal	50	church	IN	#26	y
26	Adam	31	Pastor	1	2	4	Pentecostal	50	church	IN	#25	y
27	Sharon	35	human resources	2	2,13	15 - 1 year break	Catholic	90	university	WI	#28	n
28	Tod	42	sales (self employed)	3	2,13,20	15 - 1 year break	none	120	res work	WI	#27	n
29	Lisa	30	student	1	newborn	4	Jewish	65	res home	OH	#30	y
30	Jordan	34	professor	1	newborn	4	Jewish	65	res home	OH	#29	y
31	Tanya	28	pizza delivery driver	1	2	6	pagan	90	Café	WI	#32	y
32	John	32	sales coordinator	1	2	6	pagan/ Native Americam	90	Café	WI	#31	y
33	Samantha	37	homemaker/ doula	1	2	4	Italian	70	res home	IN	#34	y
34	Don	47	self-employed	1	2	4	New Zealand	50	res home	IN	#33	y
35	Jamie	30	teacher	1	1	6	none	90	res home	WI	#36	y
36	Jerry	unknown	teacher	1	1	6	Lutheran	55	res home	WI	#35	y
37	Chantal	24	homemaker/midwife	1	3	6	Christian	65	res home	WI	#38	y
38	Jacob	unknown	unemployed/disability	1	3	6	Christian	65	res home	WI	#37	y
39	Tina	32	surgeon's tech	3	under 1,2,9	4	Lutheran	25	res home	WI	#40	y
40	Gabe	34	carpenter	2	under 1, 2	3	Lutheran	20	res home	WI	#39	y

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