

Mothers' Experiences of Cooperative Coparenting with their Coresident Partners in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Bryndl Hohmann-Marriott and Jessie McMath

Abstract

This pilot study uses focus groups in a large New Zealand city to provide a preliminary view of mothers' lived experiences of coparenting. The ten mothers with coresident partners and young children revealed their perception of cooperative parenting partnerships in two ways. First, even though the division of childcare was unequal, mothers expected partners to be responsive to their needs by providing backup and giving them an opportunity to switch off. Second, mothers felt that complementary parenting styles were successful when they and their partners shared values and managed any conflict which arose. This pilot study provides a promising beginning for further cross-national research into New Zealand coparenting.

This study explores how a small group of mothers in New Zealand view their coparental relationship with their coresident partner. Like most developed countries, over the past several decades parenting in New Zealand has followed a trend of caregiving becoming increasingly shared between the parents, though not necessarily equally shared (Cabrera et al. 2000). The Ritchie study (1999) interviewed New Zealand parents over four decades (1960s to 1990s), finding that in the 1960s care of children was entirely the mother's responsibility, although decision-making authority resided with the father. Over the next three decades, the Ritchie study found that decision-making authority became more fully shared, care of the children was somewhat shared, and responsibility was sometimes shared but more often fell to the mother. In all decades, shared decision-making was more prevalent in families where the mother was employed (Ritchie, 1999). This pattern of fathers participating in caregiving tasks while the responsibility for those tasks falls to mothers was also found in a study by Henry and Tolich (2000). Thus, although it is important that fathers are becoming more hands-on, the final responsibility for making sure those tasks are accomplished most often rests with the mother. This study focuses on coresident couples. An understanding of these coparental relationships may also be helpful in providing a context for the coparenting of separated parents, given

that many parents of young children may later separate. Cooperative coparenting after separation is a highly important issue, and research in New Zealand has found that separated parents concerned about their children's wellbeing are often motivated to find ways to work together with their child's other parent (Opie 2008, Robertson, Pryor & Moss 2008).

One of the dynamics which has created the opportunity for shared childcare in coresident families has been the entry of women into the labour force (Callister et al., 2007; Callister, 1999; Yeoman et al., 2008; Ritchie, 1999). In New Zealand, approximately 45% of mothers of children age 0-2 and 62% of mothers of children 3-4 are in the labour force, either part- or full-time (Statistics NZ, 2012). The pattern in New Zealand domestic division of labour shows men undertaking a greater proportion of paid work, while women undertake more unpaid family work, a pattern comparable to other industrialised countries (Callister, 2005). This study sheds some initial light on the views of mothers in this situation.

Changing Family Roles

Qualitative evidence of parents' experiences has been important in understanding how mothers and fathers perceive their new family roles. Studies from the UK show that the newer expression of fatherhood differs from the less hands-on approach of earlier generations (Shirani & Henwood, 2011). Expectations have been reshaped to incorporate more care, more sensitivity, and more involvement in parenting in the public eye (Henwood & Procter, 2003). One aspect of the 'new' fatherhood is the idea that fathers need to build a unique parent-infant relationship, in order to offset the advantage that mothers have had as the principal attachment figure, and thus need to foster a sensitive and caring change within themselves (Bell et al., 2007; Chin, Hall & Daiches, 2011). Miller (2010) found that the change in normative fathering practices in the UK may have been facilitated by the introduction of two weeks of paid parental leave for fathers, which enabled fathers to fulfil their expectations and intentions of fatherhood in the early days of infancy. Their quick return to work and the expectation of fathers to financially provide for their families places constraints on their involvement, however (Miller, 2010, 2011).

Despite parents increasingly sharing care, fathers and mothers are not equally involved. Time-use studies in NZ comparing all mothers and all fathers have found that mothers with coresident partners and young children spent more time on childcare than fathers with coresident partners and young children: 2

hours and 49 minutes for mothers on an average day compared with 1 hour and 35 minutes for fathers (Bascand 2011). A study from Australia which directly compared two coresident parents has shown that that mothers, compared to their coresident partners, spend more time in caregiving tasks, have more time alone with children, and have more responsibility for managing care, regardless of their employment schedule (Craig 2006). Even when fathers are involved, time-use studies of the UK find that they tend to be most involved on weekends and to engage in more playful interaction rather than physical care and spending time alone with their children (Hook & Wolfe, 2012).

These studies offer a detailed look at parents' caregiving and an initial glimpse into the ways in which fathers and mothers relate to one another, but do not directly address the coparental relationship. A qualitative study focused on the coparental relationship could add to this ongoing exploration of major family change.

Cooperative Coparenting

Increasing levels of shared care mean that fathers and mothers need to work together to parent their children. When parents cooperate, their children benefit (Abidin & Brunner, 1995; McBride & Rane, 1998). The key elements of cooperative coparenting have been developed through observational and survey research. This research finds that cooperative partners support one another as parents, deal constructively with disagreements, share responsibility for the child, and manage family interactions (Belsky, Crnic, & Gable, 1995; Feinberg, 2002; McHale, 1995; McHale et al., 2004). Supportiveness between parents includes parents' affirming one another's abilities as a parent, acknowledging and respecting one other's contributions, and advocating one another's parenting decisions and authority (Woodworth, Belsky & Crnic, 1996; Feinberg, 2002; McHale, 1995). Shared responsibility can encompass coordinated management of the family as well as a division of labour which both partners find equitable. Closely related is the division of child-related care, which can be a particularly contentious issue both at the time of the transition to parenthood and beyond (i.e. Cowan & Cowan, 1988). Childrearing disagreement, according to Feinberg (2002), is found when parents have differing opinions about child-related topics, such as values, discipline, or education. This disagreement is not necessarily problematic, as parents may 'agree to disagree' about their differences. However, it can pose a problem if it affects parents' ability to be consistent in their parenting, particularly in their

discipline. The importance of constructive disagreement is highlighted by the concept of management of family interactions. Parents may not always agree on their parenting, in fact, parents themselves observe that coming to an agreement on childrearing issues is an area of frequent difficulty (Feinberg, 2002). Cooperative coparenting is found in the balance between parents in their interactions with the child (Feinberg, 2002; McHale & Rasmussen, 1988).

In this understanding of coparenting, ‘*co-*’ means ‘*co-operative*’ and ‘*co-ordinated*’ rather than ‘*co-equal*.’ That is, successful coparents will not necessarily be equally involved in parenting, as measured by time or responsibility. More important than equal involvement for this conceptualization is the cooperation and coordination between the partners. It is not entirely certain whether this conceptualization reflects parents’ own views. The extent to which they themselves experience their parenting partnership as cooperative will thus be particularly informative.

The Cultural Context of Coparenting

Coparenting is shaped by parents’ beliefs, values, and expectations, which in turn are shaped by their cultural context. It is thus of great importance to consider coparenting across contexts (Kurrien & Vo 2004, McHale et al. 2004). Although most coparenting research has focused on the United States, some research has explored families in other cultural contexts, for example the cross-national analysis of United States and Chinese families conducted by McHale and colleagues (McHale, Rao & Krasnow 2000). These studies indicate that Chinese fathers may be more emotionally distant from their children than US fathers. Perhaps linked to this, levels of coparental conflict also differed, with higher levels of conflict in the US than in China. These studies illustrate the value of examining coparenting in multiple contexts.

New Zealand presents an interesting example of a country which shares some family context with the United States (i.e. both have a similar total fertility rate and historically British norms of family; Bascand 2011), yet which differs in other ways (i.e. New Zealand has higher rates and greater acceptance of nonmarital fertility and the concept of family is shaped by the Māori concept of *whānau*; Metge 1995, 2001).

When understanding parents in a new country context, it is helpful to hear their own voices, to avoid making errors in interpretation. Taken together with the survey and observational research, qualitative evidence from focus groups offers a triangulation of coparenting indicators. Thus, this project represents

research which directly asks parents in a non-US context about their experiences of parenting with their child's other parent.

Method

The aim of the study was to understand the participants' experiences in their own terms as much as possible. To encourage discussion, focus groups were conducted. Within the groups, the participants together constructed their discussion of the meanings of parenting with the moderator's questions as a framework. Rather than making claims about how mothers are enacting their coparenting, this study represents their discussion with other mothers of the meanings of their own experiences parenting with a partner.

The first author conducted several exploratory focus groups in a major New Zealand city. The study focused on parents of children aged 0-4 to maintain consistency with the majority of coparenting research which concentrates on this age group. In New Zealand many parents participate in playgroups, which are usually offered to parents with children any age from birth until school entry (age 5). These are usually hosted by nonprofit organizations such as parent support centres and churches, and ask for a very small donation (a 'gold coin' donation, about \$1 US). Parents attending playgroups share the commonalities of having preschool-aged children and being available at the time of the playgroup. This can mean that the parents are on parental leave, not employed, employed part-time, or have a nonstandard shift. Parents working standard 9-5 hours will thus be unable to attend these playgroups and were not able to participate in this study.

The first author and a research assistant contacted several playgroups which were open to a diverse population. They were informed that fathers sometimes attended the playgroups, but on the days of the focus groups, there were no fathers in attendance. Thus, although the project was not specifically targeting mothers or excluding fathers, the focus groups contained only mothers.

With the support and assistance of the playgroup leaders, the first author conducted group interviews with about 3-4 mothers at a time in a separate room, while their children played in the playgroup. The interviews typically lasted about 40 minutes. The ten mothers who were interviewed ranged in age from late 20's to early 40's. Mothers had between 1 and 4 children, whose ages ranged from less than 1 to early teens. Several had blended families that included stepchildren or children from former partnerships. Participants were a

mix of ethnic backgrounds and included both NZ-born and immigrants. They had a range of employment situations, including maternity leave, part-time at-home employment, and full-time on-site employment. Participants refer to their co-parent using the term 'husband' as well as 'partner' which is generally used in New Zealand to refer to both legal spouses as well as defacto relationships (cohabiting partner; Crothers & McCormack 2006, Pryor 2005).

In the groups, the first author began each focus group with an ice-breaker asking each participant how many children she had and the children's ages. The three follow up questions asked "What are the most important ways that parents work together to raise their children? When parents cooperate, what's the best thing about that? What's the hardest thing about cooperating with a partner?" The group discussions were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist, and the transcriptions were thematically analyzed by both authors following the method given in Braun and Clarke (2006). All participants were given pseudonyms, and all quotes used for publication were cleaned to remove stutters and fillers (i.e. 'um,' 'ah,' and 'like').

Thematic Analysis

The mothers were candid in their description of unequal caregiving arrangements in their families. Despite this, they were overwhelmingly positive about their partners' role as a parent. Mothers' descriptions of parenting with their partners fell into two overarching themes: support and balance. The theme of support focused on active participation in caregiving, and was experienced when the partner was responsive to the mother's need for backup and the opportunity to switch off. The balance theme focused on the negotiation necessitated by complementary yet differing parenting styles, which were experienced as successful when grounded in shared values and constructively managed conflict. These themes capture the way in which these New Zealand mothers viewed parenting with their partner as a cooperative and coordinated system.

Participation in Caregiving

The participants reflected the cultural expectations of New Zealand mothers as the primary parent. The mothers in the groups accepted these role expectations, but felt that this meant that they relied more on their partners' parenting support than vice versa.

Alex found agreement from the other members of her group for her description of the father role:

Maybe [fathers] don't see themselves as taking that main parenting role. I think they make the assumption that we take the main parenting role and although they are the co-parent, I would say that they'd almost see themselves as the supporting parent.

Alex thus underscores the understanding of co-parent as co-operative, rather than co-equal. Nicola also saw the mother as the main caregiver:

Usually the mother's the one that's doing most of the caring. But every now and then, your husband [needs to] be willing to do part of that as well. And even though he can't a lot of the time, if he never changes a nappy or he never feeds the baby then [he]'ll just rely on you to do it. So even if it's only once a week, [he can] feed the breakfast in the morning on a Saturday or something.

Fathers' involvement with the children, although unequal, was nevertheless greater than their participation in household tasks, as illustrated by Elizabeth: "The guys take a different approach, they don't necessarily see all the domestic stuff, they're just concerned about spending time with the kids." Here again the responsibility for the unpaid domestic labour rests with the mother, even when the father does complete some of these tasks.

When the mothers expressed frustration, it was not with the discrepancy in involvement, but with their partners' difficulty in understanding the mothers' parenting responsibilities and how the father could contribute. Joanne offers an example of a time she needed to point out to her partner what she does as a mother and how that differed from his involvement:

I just had a conversation with Pete about the amount of hours that I spend with her [the couple's young daughter] to what he spends with her and he sort of looked at me blankly like, 'What are you talking about?' And then when I pointed out that fact that I might be there all day until I go to work late in the afternoon and then he'll come home and he'll pick her up at 5.00pm, but by the time 6.30pm rolls around she's in bed, so he has her for like an hour.

Alex typified this frustration when describing how she needs to make a request for her partner to help her: "I often have to say, 'Can you?' When he helps me out with those things it's like he's helping me, I don't think he would take a lead in making sure those things are done". These women make it clear that the responsibility rests with the mother, reflecting prior observations of unequal responsibility in New Zealand (Ritchie 1999, Henry & Tolich 2000).

In the context of this recognized and acknowledged inequality of caregiving, the mothers identified two main avenues for cooperation with their partner, support and balance.

Support

The first theme of cooperative parenting was an active form of support. Many participants identified support as the most important aspect of co-parenting. In a discussion in response to the question about the best thing about parenting with a partner, Elizabeth said, “You know, there’s no way we would’ve survived if it was one of us on our own. Having that person there to share that load just makes a huge difference.”

The stories these mothers told described relying heavily upon their partners in order to cope with the ongoing and demanding, yet satisfactory, pressures of parenthood. The participants elaborated on what their partners’ support meant to them, and the analysis revealed two main subthemes in their discussion, backup and switching off. For each of these, the participants made clear that support from their partners is not only welcomed and appreciated, but also relied upon.

Support as Backup

When asked what the best thing was that partners could do, Nicola and Maria, in two separate groups, each responded with the same phrase, “Back you up.” Conversely, when asked about the hardest thing about parenting with a partner, the first response was typically to talk about the partner being absent or not providing support. Maria clarifies that key to backup is the partner’s responsiveness:

It is better though if you have a husband that can help you and understand you, like when you’re grumpy they know you’re having a hard time for your child.

The mothers described their need for backup from partners in order to facilitate their own competent and consistent parenting. Backup ranges in definition and context for the participants, but the primary context in which the participants used the term backup was to represent the idea of working together as a team. The reason for the mothers’ reliance on backup was offered when they described their need to switch off to obtain occasional relief from the demands of childcare.

Support as switching off

In response to the question about the best parts of parenting with a partner, Nicola got right to the point, “You get a break.” Joanne was also emphatic about the benefits of a cooperative parenting partnership:

It's great when they come home and when they finish work and you think gee, I can just breathe again and the pressure goes away a wee bit, but when it's just you it's very, very hard.

Alex had similar needs from her partner:

I think that the best thing is knowing that there'll be some point you can just sort of take a back seat. The more I think about it the more I can't imagine what it would be like as a single parent, and you can never switch off.

Lin also spoke up about the help and support her husband provides: "It's really good, when he comes back he can help me from time to time." Nicola elaborated on this comment by explaining why switching off was needed, "Like a screaming baby—there's only so much you can cope with, isn't there."

Switching off has a dual undercurrent, suggesting both taking turns and taking a break. Taking a break was necessary because of the high demands of parenting, particularly for mothers who take on a larger share of caregiving. The participants were forthright in their discussions of how mentally, emotionally and physically exhausting it is to provide care for young children. The mothers articulated that when alone with the children, they need to be continually attentive and it is difficult to get a break. It is their partner whom they rely on to switch positions with them so that they can switch off for a time.

Balance

Balance is the second key theme of cooperative parenting raised by the mothers. As they described it, balance is focused on coordination of values and views between the partners, rather than on the partners' involvement with children. The mothers described how their partner's parenting complemented their own, supported by shared values and constructively-managed conflict. As with support, the central message was of the parents cooperatively working together. In one focus group Alex's response to the hardest thing about parenting with a partner generated the two cornerstones of balance, different styles and shared values: "It can be quite hard sometimes having somebody else. ... You've got different styles but as long as where that's coming from is the same value, it's balance."

Balance Through Different Styles of Parenting

Participants recognized that two parents will have two different styles of parenting. For example, Elizabeth related it to levels of discipline exercised by parents:

[Different styles of parenting] can bring some balance, whereas if you're both hard or you're both soft... Or you can have someone say,

like my husband and I do this when we don't actually agree with how tough we're being, so having someone outside of that situation going, 'Oh, I think you're just being a bit tough,' you know, just to tone down a response... But you've got to obviously respect that person to accept that as well.

These ten mothers commonly described the division of parenting in their relationships as the children having play-based interactions with their fathers, while the mothers were more responsible for practical forms of care. This was viewed by Lin as an advantage because it provided a balance of parent-child interactions: "It's good for the child, because [he has] had some time with daddy... [Kids] have different fun with daddy."

Respect for one another as the parents find and maintain balance was particularly voiced within the areas of discipline, household responsibility, and interactions with children. In recognising the challenging nature of having different styles of parenting, there is no doubt among participants that once the right balance is discovered it is beneficial. Essential to finding this balance is not so much sharing styles of parenting but the partners sharing values and managing their differences.

Balance Achieved By Shared Values and Managed Conflict

The concept of shared values emerged among the participants a key means of achieving balance. Sometimes those values are experienced without being explicit, as described by Alex:

I think certainly having some shared values [is important], but sometimes you don't actually talk, you just nut those values out as you come up against problems. You don't sit down for your kids and go, 'What are our values and how are we going to parent?'

Like Alex, many of the participants agreed that the partners' shared values developed as the relationship progressed, rather than being specifically planned prior to parenting. Others, however, described shared values as emerging more explicitly through discussion and openness with their partners. The mothers could also see evidence of shared values in the two parents' consistent enforcement of rules with children, as Maria discusses:

The kids, I think if they know that you're working together they're happier. They know that you together are backing each other, so that they don't get away with you and so that they know already their boundary...

Different styles of parenting can create a sense of balance, but these differences can also lead to conflict. The mothers in the study were particularly concerned with how to manage conflict when it arose.

Leah emphasised empathy and tolerance for the partner, “You've gotta be very tolerant, 'cause you won't get it right. Neither of you will get it right.” For Emma, a discussion in private was the preferred solution: “[If] you don't agree with each other, don't let the children know that you don't agree. You could talk about it later on, which doesn't always happen... Because you're never gonna agree on everything”.

The participants were aware of the potential for conflict and did not avoid discussing it, but this was not a particularly strong theme. The shared values which underscore the complementary parenting styles were much more salient. Thus, regardless of the extent to which the parents' involvement in childcare is unequal, mothers can experience a sense of balance when they and their partners are working to bring together their complementary styles of parenting by establishing shared values and constructively resolving conflict.

Discussion

These ten mothers experienced parenting with their coresident partners as cooperative, articulating their cooperation with their partner in two main ways. First was a practical, hands-on coordination of involvement. The mothers described an unequal division of childcare, but rather than wishing for equal involvement, these women looked to their partners to be responsive to their needs. The mothers' coparenting partners could be responsive by acting as a backup caregiver and giving the mothers an opportunity to switch off. This turn-taking relieved the mothers of some of the pressure they felt as primary caregiver. Second, the mothers perceived a sense of balance when their partner's parenting style complemented their own. The challenge presented by the partners' different parenting styles could be overcome when the mothers felt that they and their partners were operating from the same set of shared values, and when they constructively managed conflict.

These findings contribute to the larger story of coparenting by offering mothers' own words describing their coparental relationship, and by illustrating coparenting in a non-US context. The findings are consistent with prior research in that the mothers perceived a cooperative parenting partnership as beneficial. The mothers spontaneously discussed the core aspects of coparenting which have been identified in prior research (Belsky, Crnic, & Gable, 1995; Feinberg,

2002; McHale, 1995; McHale et al., 2004), indicating that the key features of supportiveness, shared responsibility, constructive disagreement, and the balance of time interacting with children are salient to parents across contexts.

The mothers' descriptions of cooperative parenting revealed some nuances which make a contribution to the existing coparenting literature. Most notable was that the mothers who participated in this study did not define a coparenting relationship as one in which the two parents spent equal time involved with their children. In New Zealand there remains an expectation that mothers will be the primary parent, perhaps leading the mothers in this group to accept that role uncritically (Baker 2001, 2010). This emphasis on responsiveness over level of involvement illustrates one way in which partners' relationship with one another as parents differs from their relationship and involvement with their children. It also provides confirmation that mothers themselves perceive coparenting in a way similar to that of researchers, emphasizing cooperation and coordination between parents.

Research into supportive coparenting is often focused on verbal and nonverbal affirmation by the partners (Woodworth, Belsky & Crnic, 1996; Feinberg, 2002; McHale, 1995). The mothers in this study did not explicitly mention this, however. Instead, they viewed a successful partnership as resting on shared values and constructive conflict. It may be that parents who share values with one another and who manage their conflict constructively will be more expressive of their support for one another's parenting, but the expressions of support were not especially salient to this group of mothers.

Much literature is concerned with conflict between parents, particularly because of its negative effects on children (i.e. Margolin et al., 2001; McHale, 1995). In their brief discussions of disagreement, this group of mothers was most concerned with how disagreement was managed. Although the level of disagreement may also be important, they did not mention this. It is possible that high levels of disagreement are of major concern to only a small portion of parents, but that when it is strongly present it is noticeably negative. It may also be that mothers experiencing high levels of conflict could have been reluctant to speak up in a group context.

Shared values were far more important than disagreement for the participants in this study. These are not quite two sides to the same coin; it is possible to have differences which do not lead to disagreements. The participants pointed out that the key to this is shared values. Feinberg (2002)

points out that disagreements may not be problematic because parents may ‘agree to disagree,’ and mothers in the current study also described the process of negotiating differences and resolving them in the ongoing course of parenting.

This pilot study reveals the views of a small group of partnered mothers in one New Zealand city. Through their thoughtful reflections on their coparenting relationships and experiences, they can provide potentially informative insights into mothers’ own perceptions of coparenting as well as coparenting in the New Zealand context. These preliminary findings can be carried forward in three ways. First is the inclusion of the voices of fathers. In subsequent focus group and interview studies, concentrated effort needs to be made to include fathers and gain an understanding of coparenting from the perspective of both partners. Second, observational and survey research can be conducted in New Zealand, using the insights provided by the pilot data to identify potential areas of similarity and difference from prior work in other countries. Finally, it may be of value to conduct similar focus groups or interviews to gather the voices and views of parents in the United States. Their perception of coresident coparenting can then be considered alongside knowledge about coparenting which comes from observational and survey research.

References:

- Abidin, R., & Brunner, J. (1995) Development of a parenting alliance inventory. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology* 24: 31–40.
- Baker, M. (2001) *Families, Labour and Love*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Baker, M. (2010) Motherhood, employment, and the ‘child penalty.’ *Women’ Studies International Forum*, 33: 215-224.
- Bascand, G. (2011) *Births and Deaths: Year ended September 2011*. Wellington: Statistics New Zealand.
- Bascand, G. (2011) *Time Use Survey: 2009/10*. Wellington: Statistics New Zealand.
- Bell, L., Goulet, C., Tribble, D., Paul, D., Boisclair, A. & Tronick, E. (2007) Mother’ and Fathers’ Views of the Interdependence of their Relationships with their Infant: A Systems Perspective on Early Family Relationships. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 13(2): 179-200.
- Belsky, J., Crnic, K., & Gable, S. (1995) The determinants of coparenting in families with toddler boys: Spousal differences and daily hassles. *Child Development*, 66: 629-642.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3: 77-101.
- Cabrera, N. J., Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., Bradley, R. H., Hofferth, S. & Lamb, M. E. (2000) Fatherhood in the twenty-first century. *Child Development*, 71: 127-136.

- Callister, P. (1999) Iron John or Ironing John? The Changing Lives of New Zealand Fathers. In: S. Birks & P. Callister (Eds.), *Perspectives on Fathering* (pp.23-40) Palmerston North: Centre for Public Policy Evaluation, Massey University.
- Callister, P. (2005) *The changing gender distribution of paid and unpaid work in New Zealand* (Working Paper 05/07), Wellington: New Zealand Treasury.
- Callister, P., Didham, R., Newell, J. & Potter, D. (2007) 'Family Ethnicity': Knitting a Jumper Using Two Woolly Concepts. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 32: 32-48.
- Chin, R., Hall, P. & Daiches, A. (2011) Fathers' experiences of their transition of fatherhood: a metasynthesis. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 29(1): 4-18.
- Cowan, C. & Cowan, P. (1988) Who Does What When Partners Become Parents: Implications for men, women and marriage. In: R. Palkovitz & M. B. Sussman (Eds.) *Transitions to Parenthood* (pp.105-132) New York, Harworth Press.
- Craig, L. (2006) Does father care mean fathers share? A comparison of how mothers and fathers in intact families spend time with children. *Gender & Society*, 20: 259-281.
- Crothers, C. & McCormack, F. (2006) *Towards a Statistical Typology of New Zealand Households and Families: The Efficacy of the Family Life Cycle Model and Alternatives*. (Blue Skies Report No. 15/06), Wellington: Families Commission.
- Feinberg, M. E. (2002) Coparenting and the transition to parenthood: A framework for prevention. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 5: 173-195.
- Henry, E. & Tolich, M. (2000) The third shift: Task allocation and ultimate responsibility on family camping holidays. *New Zealand Sociology*, 15: 284-303.
- Henwood, K. & Procter, J. (2003) The 'good father': Reading men's accounts of paternal involvement during the transition to first-time fatherhood. *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, 42: 337-355.
- Hook, J. L. & Wolfe, C. M. (2012) New fathers? Residential fathers' time with children in four countries. *Journal of Family Issues*, 33: 415-450.
- Kurrien, R. & Vo, E. (2004) Who's in Charge?: Coparenting in South and Southeast Asian Families. *Journal of Adult Development*, 11(3): 207-219.
- Margolin, G., Gordis, E. & John, R. (2001) Coparenting: A link between marital conflict and parenting in two-parent families. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(1): 3-21.
- McBride, B. & Rane, T. (1998) Parenting alliance as a predictor of father involvement: An exploratory study. *Family Relations*, 47: 229-236.
- McHale, J. & Rasmussen, J. (1998) Coparental and family group-level dynamics during infancy: Early family precursors of child and family functioning during preschool. *Development and Psychopathology*, 10(1): 39-59.
- McHale, J. (1995) Co-parenting and triadic interactions during infancy: The roles of marital distress and child gender. *Developmental Psychology*, 31: 985-996.
- McHale, J., Kuersten-Hogan, R. & Rao, N. (2004) Growing points for coparenting theory and research. *Journal of Adult Development*, 11: 221-233.
- McHale, J., Rao, N. & Krasnow, A. (2000) Constructing Family Climates: Chinese mothers' reports of their co-parenting behaviour and preschoolers' adaptation. *International Journal of Behavioural Development*, 24(1): 111-118.
- Metge, J. (1995) *New Growth from Old: The whānau in the modern world*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Metge, Joan (2001) Family and Whanau in a changing world. In: Birks, Stuart (Ed.) *Child and family: Children in families as reflected in statistics, research, and policy*. Proceedings of Social Policy Forum, Massey University Centre for Public Policy Evaluation, p.19-25.

- Miller, T. (2010) 'It's the Triangle that's Difficult to Square': Men's Intentions and Practices around Caring, Work and First-time Fatherhood. *Fathering*, 8(3), 362-378.
- Miller, T. (2011) Falling Back into Gender? Men's Narratives and Practices around First-time Fatherhood. *Sociology*, 45(6): 1094-1109.
- Opie, M. A. (2008) *Shared Parenting after Separation and Divorce in New Zealand*. Doctoral thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington.
- Pryor, J. (2005) Families in New Zealand: The Challenge for Policymakers. *Policy Quarterly*, 1(1): 15-20.
- Ritchie, J. (1999) Women and the Family in New Zealand. Presented at the Seventh International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women, Trömsö, Norway.
- Robertson, J.P., Pryor, J. & Moss, J. (2008) *Putting the Children First: Caring for Children After Separation*. Wellington: Families Commission.
- Shirani, F. & Henwood, K. (2011) Continuity and change in a qualitative longitudinal study of fatherhood: relevance without responsibility. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 14(1): 17-29.
- Statistics New Zealand (2012) *Childcare Use and Work Arrangements, 1998 and 2009*. Wellington: Statistics New Zealand.
- Woodworth, S., Belsky, J. & Crnic, K. (1996) The Determinants of Fathering during the Child's Second and Third Years of Life: A developmental analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 58(3): 679-692.
- Yeoman, A., Cook, L., Wong, K., Pryor, J. & Prasad, R. (2008) *The Kiwi Nest: 60 Years of Change in New Zealand Families*. (Research Report no. 3/08), Wellington: Families Commission.

Acknowledgements: This research was supported by an Otago University Research Grant awarded to the first author. Initial work on the project was contributed by Darryl Grant.

Bryndl Hohmann-Marriott is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Otago. She is a family sociologist and demographer who studies couple relationships and childbearing. Her work has appeared in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Social Forces*, *Journal of Family Issues*, and *Maternal and Child Health Journal*.

Jessie McMath is a Sociology Honours student at the University of Otago.

Copyright of New Zealand Sociology is the property of New Zealand Sociology and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.