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Fathers as Stay-at-Home Dads: Fathers' and Mothers' Perspectives on Children's School Experiences

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ABSTRACT

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As traditional family roles change and circumstances at home become increasingly varied in contemporary society, the experiences of children also undergo change. For instance, when fathers take on primary caregiving responsibilities, those differing circumstances also impact their children. Therefore, it is important for researchers to study how changing parental roles affect children in the home. Through the use of qualitative research design, this research focuses on how the experiences of children within the home may be impacted when fathers are the primary caregiver. Although previous research has examined several aspects of family dynamics with so-called stay-at-home fathers, research has not yet evaluated how full-time fathering in the home may impact children's educational and school experiences. This thesis describes six fathers' and six mothers' perspectives about their children's school experiences when the father provides childcare in the home while the mother works full-time outside the home. Results suggest that division of roles in a family can affect some areas of children's experiences and responses implied there are multiple interacting variables that contribute to the parental influences on children. Mothers focus on the social experiences of their children as components of overall school experience. Fathers more frequently talked about the emotional and behavioral components of school experience. The results inform the disciplines of family science, teacher education, and school psychology of key considerations when working with children in this nontraditional family arrangement.

Keywords: fathers as primary caregivers, stay-at-home dads, school experience, nontraditional roles

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Over recent decades social norms have increasingly become more egalitarian between women and men, with accompanying shifts in traditional family roles (Oláh et al., 2018). Among the many changes in family dynamics is what has sometimes been called the "Daddy Shift" (Smith, 2009). This "daddy shift," as defined by its original researchers, denotes an increase in fathers serving as primary caregivers in the home and cutting back on work hours to focus more on raising children.

This trend is still relatively small but represents a significant shift from the past. The experiences of families with stay-at-home fathers who take on an increasing amount of that responsibility deserve careful consideration, but very limited research has examined the experiences of these nontraditional families (Bailey-Dick, 2002; Powell et al., 2016). Researchers, educators, and administrative policymakers have acknowledged the influence of mother and father involvement with their children (McBride et al., 2005), but as families continue to change and evolve, it is important to know how these changes may affect children.

The experiences of children in nontraditional families will shape the future of our society, and it is in our collective best interest to foster the successful development and educational attainment of all children. Understanding how differing parental roles can affect children's school experience will enable better responsiveness to those children in educational settings, where they spend the bulk of their time from about age five to eighteen. Some research has considered the family as a whole, but even less research has focused on the experiences of children, and little is known about their school experience. This research thesis is intended to fill the research gap concerning fathers as stay-at-home parents and their children's experiences.

The perspectives of both fathers and mothers are important to evaluate simultaneously, since those perspectives likely interact in many ways and when considered together lead to a clearer understanding of the family dynamics and of the children in the home. The specific research questions evaluated by this thesis are as follows:

1. What are mothers' perceptions of how their children's school experiences (including academic, social, emotional, and behavioral components) are affected by having the father as their primary caregiver?

2. What are fathers' perceptions of how their children's school experiences (including academic, social, emotional, and behavioral components) are affected by having them as the primary caregiver?

3. What differences and similarities in beliefs do mothers and fathers have about the role of fathers as primary caregivers and its influence on their children's school experience?

In exploring these perspectives and then comparing the similarities and disparities in belief, researchers and audiences can recognize and understand more the experiences occurring within the families directly from the mothers and fathers themselves. Where the research regarding parental effect on children's school experience has usually focused on either mothers or fathers separately, it is crucial that both perspectives are gathered and compared in order to highlight any crossover in perspectives as well as any significant differences. In addition, this research is important in obtaining a direct view into different families and gains deeper insight in order to best inform researchers on future directions to take in supporting students within differing families and dynamics.

It is important to note, various research on shifts in family dynamics specify the difference between primary caregivers in the home and stay-at-home dads. A primary caregiver in the home is the individual within a family who spends the most time responding to the needs of their children. A stay-at-home father or stay-at-home dad (also SAHD) is specified as a father within a family unit who remains physically in the home. The amount of time in which fathers must remain in the home to be considered stay-at-home dads ranges greatly. Studies in the past on stay-at home fathers have relied on self-identification as stay-at-home fathers as the only criteria for participation (Merla, 2008; Rochlen et al., 2010) where others have required that fathers be in the home fulltime or have left employment to be home with children (Zimmerman, 2000). A third method of operationalizing stay-at-home fathers within the research has been to establish a specific number of hours fathers are expected to be in the home in order to be considered the stay-at-home parent (Fischer & Anderson, 2012). Being a SAHD does not necessarily indicate an individual is the primary caregiver and primary caregiver does not necessarily mean they have to stay at home. A father could be the primary caregiver and take on most of the responsibilities of caring for their children, but still work outside of the home, and a SAHD could be physically present in the home, but another adult could be the one taking greater responsibility for the care of children. Increasingly, fathers serve as the primary caregivers in the home (Smith, 2009). As family dynamics shift and parental roles switch, it is also important to delve deeper into the research regarding mothers and fathers and their individual influences within the home.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Shifts in parental roles to more nontraditional dynamics may influence academic, behavioral, and socioemotional aspects of a child's educational experience, and it is important that we understand the associated complexities. Prior research has shown, for example, that academic performance and grades depend significantly on the presence of a mother in the home (Zick et al., 2001), but most research on fathers' influence has focused on conditions such as father absence, abuse, or similar problematic variables rather than on potential positive parental influences (McLanahan et al., 2013). Clearly, parental roles and the associated actions of both mothers and fathers have multiple influences on children that warrant careful consideration. Prior to examining the particular perceptions and influences that fathers may have as the stay-at-home parent, it may be useful to first take a step back and understand the broader literature regarding education and differing parental influence.

Parental Influence on Childhood School Experience

Parents have a major influence on students' school experience. The influence of mothers and fathers can be both direct and indirect (Ingram et al., 2007; Myrberg & Rosén, 2009). Direct influence means the parents implicitly instruct or persuade children in some way. Indirect influence means parents serve as models to the student or provide needed resources. For example, fathers can directly impact a student's grades and school achievement by helping with homework or directly helping with other school related problems. A father may influence their child more indirectly by providing different tools in the home that can in turn affect a child's schooling, such as school supplies. These are just a few examples of how parental influence can manifest itself.

In addition to what parental influence can look like (direct or indirect), these influences can also affect many different areas and outcomes for children. For example, prior research has indicated two broad areas that may particularly be influenced by parental involvement, which are academic performance and outcomes as well as socioemotional development and wellbeing (Campbell & Verna, 2007; Sheridan et al., 2014). In addition, student behavior can also be affected by parental influence (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2006). For the purpose of this research, childhood school experience is operationalized into different categories based on relevant research. Children's school experiences consist of academic, behavioral, and socioemotional components, and each of those factors will be reviewed. How parenting can influence those issues, and what we know specifically about father's influence, will also be discussed.

Academic Experience

Academics are one area that make up children's school experience. Academic experience can include a number of different elements. One element regarding academics, for example, is academic performance. This is the degree to which a student meets their educational goals. Grade point average is one of the most common indicators of academic performance (York et al., 2015). Academic achievement is also among the elements relevant to academic experience.

The term "academic achievement" differs from academic performance in that it gathers information about long-term academic accomplishment and acquired knowledge, whereas the concept of academic performance typically focuses on short-term academic goals. Obviously, academic performance impacts academic achievement. Academic achievement, can in turn, predict future experiences, such as level of educational attainment and future career outcomes (McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001. There are various measurements used to gauge and track

academic achievement including but not limited to grades and/or standardized tests (Jeynes, 2007).

Alternatively, teacher referral and other measures that relate to teacher rating scales are used to differentiate between students who demonstrate readiness for academic advancement and those who may need additional intervention. Due to their close proximity and daily interactions, teachers have the ability to carefully observe and gauge the needs of students. However, there are also arguments suggesting that evidence and data-based referral methods are more valid than teacher referral, and academic advancement can be determined using data gathered from individual students (Erhart, 2013; VanDerHeyden et al., 2003).

Other factors contribute to academic experience as well. Motivational processes and academic desire towards goals is one factor to consider (Grant & Dweck, 2003). Academic self-efficacy can be a large part of learning and motivation for learning (Fan & William, 2010). Academic experience however is not the only marker and should not be the only item considered when looking at children's overall school experience and outcomes and won't be the only area considered within the research questions. Before exploring other factors of children's school experience however, it is important to consider how fathers and mothers individually influence academic experience.

Parent Influence on Academic Experience. Correlation between academic success and parental involvement has been a topic of substantial interest to both school professionals and researchers, and there is a plethora of information indicating a positive relationship between them (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Wilder, 2014). Children's academic performance can be positively or negatively affected depending on the type of interaction parents provide (Flores de Apodaca et al., 2015). For example, parent-child communication generally improves student's academic

experience, however homework checking, which is another type of parental involvement, can have negative effects on a student academic performance (Lv et al., 2019). Additional examples of interactions within a household include home monitoring and parent-school contact.

Unsurprisingly, students tend to obtain higher grades in school when their parents are more involved in their schoolwork (Joe & Davis, 2009). The research literature also indicates that greater parental involvement improves academic achievement over the long term, with greater school retention and educational attainment. There is also a relationship between parental involvement and school readiness (Joe & Davis, 2009). Whether or not a student is ready for school (indicated by early achievement) can be highly influenced by parents' behaviors, characteristics, and level of involvement in the home and with schools. A meta-analysis including 52 different studies looked at overall impact of parental involvement and found a positive effect of involvement on different measures of academic achievement including grades, testing, and teacher rating scales (Jeynes, 2007). Not only did they find that parental involvement has an effect on academic achievement, but it also affected other areas of academic experience as well including attitude and motivation towards learning as determined by various indices of academic attitude.

Along with academic achievement, performance, and readiness researchers have also looked into the influence of parental involvement on a student's academic self-efficacy (Griffith, 2012). Continued operationalization of self-efficacy define it as an individual's capacity to evaluate their own abilities and judge whether or not they can successfully complete tasks (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 2010). Parental engagement and communication highly influence this ability due to their direct or indirect expression of beliefs, expectations, and encouragement (Griffith, 2012). For example, various levels of parental involvement can positively predict

student intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy towards math and English (Fan & William, 2010). Academic socialization is related to this concept. Parents can influence the way a student views expectation in school and their beliefs and behaviors regarding their school development (Taylor et al., 2004). Shifts in parental roles correlate with change in academic performance, and it is therefore important to look at the separate influence mothers and fathers have on their children's experiences (Zick et al., 2001).

Father Influence on Academic Experience. In many instances throughout the literature, we can see how fathers specifically have an effect on their children, and there are many different areas in which fathers have influence over children independently from the mothers within a household as stay-at-home parents. For instance, children's education and academic achievement can significantly differ depending on father involvement, even after accounting for mother involvement (McBride et al., 2005). Later educational attainment, or how much schooling an individual completes, is one aspect of education that is independently influenced by involvement of a father (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Outcomes for students, such as high school graduation, are influenced by father presence and involvement (McLanahan et al., 2013). Commonly, fathers provide protective factors such as increasing stability of income and or family responsibilities that combat any risks present that can lead to lower educational attainment (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004).

Father presence and approach when they stay in the home can also differ from mothers' approach. Fathers, when they are the primary caregivers in the home, tend to interact with their children in more play-like styles. Their school related influence tends to take a different form, in that they have a more strategic style of navigating through schoolwork as measured by establishing homework routines, monitoring after school activities, and setting specific standards

for their children's work (Gordon & Cui, 2012). Fathers and mothers frequently approach school involvement and interaction in the home differently and therefore influence children's school experience differently.

In addition to difference in styles of interaction, there are also differences in the actual time spent with children between mothers and fathers. Research indicates that traditionally, fathers have spent less time with their children, but that these traditional trends are decreasing, and fathers are spending an increased amount of time with their children, especially when the mother takes on less of the caregiving responsibilities (Yeung et al., 2001). Consequently, as more and more fathers become the stay-at-home parent within families, it obviously follows that fathers spend increased time with their children and therefore have an increased effect in their children's lives. But how does this compare to mothers' influence in the home? Differentiating between mother and father involvement and resulting effects provides significant insight into parental effects on children's school experience.

Mother Influence on Academic Experience. Comparing mothers as the primary caregivers in a home to fathers as the primary caregivers, provides further evidence of what parental influence can look like (Shidlov-Cohen, 2004) and how it might affect research on stay-at-home families. Mothers can play a significant role in student achievement, and so as mother involvement shifts or changes, we can expect differing outcomes.

Data from a National Survey of Families in Households suggested that mothers' influence in the home can look different and have different implications in children's schooling (Zick et al., 2001). Results from the survey suggested that mothers more frequently engage in reading and homework activities with their children. They also indicated a shared value for reading activities in the home. Increases in reading and reading related activities were found to

be related to higher grades. Mother involvement, as a relational variable, created bonds between mothers and their children and are also associated with higher student academic performance and ability (Caputi et al., 2017). This has been especially true for students at elementary school ages.

The examples above are just some of the ways mothers affect and influence their children's school experience. There is value in realizing these influences as parental roles and dynamics shift. Still, these elements and factors of academic experience are only one facet of a student's overarching school experience. The second element to consider are children's social and emotional experiences while in school.

Socioemotional Experience

In addition to academic experience, a student's socioemotional experience can also contribute to their school outcomes (Erhart, 2013). Two major processing areas involved in socioemotional elements of a student's life include emotional/psychological wellbeing and social wellbeing.

Wellbeing is a significant contributing factor to student school experience and does effect school outcomes (Huebner, 2010). Wellbeing encompasses both an individual's psychological and social wellbeing (Natvig et al., 2003). Psychological wellbeing refers to an individual's mental health. This can include student's emotional regulation or affective tendencies (Gumora & Arsenio, 2002). For instance, one's ability to cope with negative emotions, such as frustration and anxiety in school, often dictates the events and outcomes of the school day. These skills, or the lack therefore, effects students' ability to learn and interact with others. Self-concept or identity is another psychological factor that has an effect on school experience (Caplan et al., 2002). Measures of students' self-concept or sense of identity can predict different aspects within school such as adjustment and achievement. Self-esteem is a part of an individual's concept of

themselves that influences school outcomes (Berger et al., 2011). When children feel confident in their abilities at school, they are more likely to engage in the activities of the classroom (Valeski & Stipek, 2003).

Students have various perceptions about their own abilities, but they also have perceptions about school. These perceptions and attitudes about school also contribute to psychological and emotional wellbeing. Academic performance, relationship with teachers, environment, and even classroom structure influence student attitudes regarding school (Valeski & Stipek, 2003). Because there are so many different influencers, attitudes about school may vary greatly across students. However, overall school experiences are altered whether or not those feelings are positive or negative. Interactions with a teacher is another factor presumed to have an effect on students' opinion concerning school. Once the student is required to engage with another individual, including a teacher, this relates to and concurrently informs students' social wellbeing.

Social wellbeing indicates whether or not an individual has healthy, secure connection with others, and is the extent of social integration, acceptance, contribution, actualization, and coherence (Berger et al., 2011). These characteristics of social wellbeing are another aspect of the socioemotional factors effecting school experience (Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2014). Positive social relationships correspond with positive outcomes regarding health, maladaptive behaviors, achievement and overall experiences (Bond et al., 2007). Connection and social engagement positively influence many qualities of a student's experiences in school (Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

To summarize, some of the common themes of socioemotional factors that make up school experience can be categorized within psychological and social wellbeing. Emotional regulation, affect, self-concept, confidence, perceptions about school, social interaction, and

social connection are all characteristics within these two categories. These are also key concepts to discuss with mothers and fathers as we gain their perspective about their children's school experience. These factors contribute to many aspects of students' school experience, including the overlapping yet distinct consideration of their behavior. Before addressing behavior as a factor of school experience, it is first important to once again look at the influence parents can have on their children's socioemotional experiences.

      Parent Influence on Socioemotional Experience. Parental involvement with their children can affect a range of socioemotional factors. One of the more critical areas of influence is with child socialization. Socialization is a process of learning acceptable behavior to fit within a society. Specifically, social experiences in school shape the development of a student's identity and their future career trajectory. This influence is especially visible when looking at socialization of specific gender roles (Eccles et al., 2000). Early exposure to gender definitions and norms originate from parental influence and beliefs. Gender is not the only aspect of socialization, however. Parents have influence on their children's development of overall self-concept (Sartor & Youniss, 2002). Body image and self-worth are additional examples of aspects of self-concept that are often affected by parental involvement (Phares et al., 2004). Preferences, behaviors, and beliefs, all important to how a person defines themselves, stem from the influence of parents and start within the family setting (Banham et al., 2000; Witt, 1997).

      These areas also translate into attitudes about school, classroom behavior, academic expectation, and retention. Consequently, parental influence on socialization and self-concept result in changes to these different areas in school. When parental involvement is increased, students tend to have better homework habits, more positive attitudes towards their school and class, and greater familiarity with their teacher and fellow students (Gonzalez-DeHass et al.,

2005; McNeal, 2014). In the long term, this involvement is also positively related to a student's future aspirations (Hill et al., 2004). By improving academic achievement and interactions with teachers and school, parental involvement subsequently shapes student ambition.

In addition to the aforementioned areas of influence, parents strongly influence emotional functioning and mental health (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Depending on their level of involvement, parents can reduce students' degree of negative emotions when they experience school stressors. They can protect against additional anxiety and provide encouragement. When parents promote communication in the home this can increase students' self-esteem, emotional regulation skills, and perceptions, which all have effect on potential depressive features (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003). However, these various areas of parental influence depend on level of involvement and can differ between fathers and mothers independently.

Father Influence on Socioemotional Experience. In a 2000 review paper, Marsiglio and colleagues once again demonstrated that in most studies that independently examine both fathers and mothers, father involvement does demonstrate independent contributions, above and beyond maternal involvement (Marsiglio et al., 2000). Father influence is not necessarily limited to academics. Children's development, both social and emotional, can be highly influenced by father involvement and interaction (Coleman et al., 2004). Student wellbeing is an aspect of this change.

Areas of wellbeing that are specifically mentioned include cognitive and social competence, positive and prosocial interactions with others, and self-discipline (Wilson & Prior, 2011). Amount of father contribution, meaning time spent with children as well as attention given to children's well-being, also predicts the likelihood of student's risky behavior (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2006). This same research also highlighted that paternal emotional support, especially with

male children, is associated with higher self-esteem and higher life satisfaction. Children's self-esteem and positive engagement can be improved also depending on the quality of father involvement (Cooper, 2009). This change in self-esteem is only one way that fathers can impress upon a child's perception of themselves. Children's perceptions are impacted regarding their own life and family situations as well (McBride et al., 2005). For example, a father's influence can impact student's ideas about economic hardship (Hango, 2007). These perceptions of financial stability and economic hardship then have consequence in relationships and later relationship quality (Gordon, 2016). Evidence of the effects of father involvement on children's perceptions about themselves and the different aspects of well-being mentioned here become even more apparent when we look at the results of the lack of father involvement in the home.

Research has found that in situations where fathers are less involved with their children and that influence is removed, children tend to have difficulties when it comes to gender identity and adjustment (De Lange, 2011). Children of fathers who take a more active role in discipline and the guidance in the home, are usually more socially competent as opposed to those who have more inactive fathers (Dubeau et al., 2013). Additional outcomes for students including social-emotional adjustment and adult mental health are influenced by father presence and involvement (McLanahan et al., 2013).

The National Center for Fathering (1996) summarizes fatherhood influence by stating that children are more confident and less anxious in situations, have greater emotional regulation (especially with frustration), have greater independence and identity, are more likely to demonstrate compassion, can have higher self-esteem and GPA, and tend to be more sociable when they develop with engaged and loving fathers (Gallup Poll on Fathering: Fathers in America, 1996). By using multiple sources of research, the researcher has listed a number of

areas in which fathers can influence children's socioemotional experiences. Mothers also have influence on their children independent from the influence of their fathers.

Mother Influence on Socioemotional Experience. As mothers' involvement with their children increases in the home, various areas of socioemotional experiences are affected. When younger children feel secure in the relationship and connectedness with their mothers, this can predict decreased anxiety levels (Maltais et al., 2015). Additional research also highlights other aspects of child socioemotional well-being that are ultimately affected by mother involvement and relationship including attachment, temperament, social and emotional intelligence and competence (Laible, 2004). Emotional regulation can also be influenced by connectedness and relationship with mothers (Contreras et al., 2000).

Additional social factors are influenced my mother involvement with children. Mothers' prioritization of support and involvement with children can have lasting positive effects on children's social competence and socialization (Dubeau et al., 2013). An interesting further consideration is that cross-gender relationships between fathers and daughters and mothers and sons has emerged as significant in determining traditional/nontraditional gender attitude (Crespi, 2003). The relationships between parent and children with the same gender may have influence and reinforce already existing traditional attitudes; however, positive relationships across gender, such as between mothers and sons, can be a factor in reducing stereotyped attitudes. Once again, indicating that both mothers and fathers can have great influence over the outcomes and experiences of their children, and understanding that impact is essential when we consider differences in family roles. A third element of school experience in which mothers and fathers may have differing effect is behavior.

Behavior Factors

In addition to the academic and socioemotional aspects of students' school experience, substantial research has demonstrated the importance of student behavior on experience in school (Elchert et al., 2017). Behavior is another possible area which may be affected by parental involvement and may change depending on parental roles in the home. It is therefore also important to understand the research on behavior factors in order to gain mothers and fathers perspectives on all aspects of child school experience. Some examples of behavioral factors include classroom conduct, needed remediation and corrective measures such as suspensions, and attendance patterns (Fredricks et al., 2005). Classroom conduct involves a range of behaviors such as cheating on tests, fighting on school property, skipping classes, bringing prohibited items to school, and so forth (Suldo et al., 2008). The many types of conduct demonstrated in the schools are typically classified into two different categories: externalizing and internalizing behaviors.

Students who experience externalizing behaviors exhibit actions visible to others that cause disruption to the class and/or harm to others. Acting out, hostility, and aggression are examples of externalizing behaviors (Ansary & Luther, 2009). In contrast, other students may experience internalizing behaviors, which are behaviors that take a more inward focus and are not usually outwardly expressed. These less visible behaviors may include experiences with fear, shyness, anxiety, depression, or somatization (Ansary & Luther, 2009). Internalizing behaviors are directed towards the self, whereas externalizing behaviors are normally directed towards others. Understanding the different manifestations of behavior puts us one step closer to understanding children's school experiences.

Varying behaviors within these two categories can all be an essential feature of a student's situation, and these behavioral components are important elements of a child's complete experience in school. Greater understanding of the common elements of students' potential school experiences, can improve comprehension of how parents and their roles can influence those experiences in school as well.

Parent Influence on Behavior. By looking at the different variations to parental involvement across households, we can further support the correlation between parental influence and childhood school experience. Research has also specifically addressed the influence parents have on their children's behaviors.

Frequency of involvement, or the amount of time parents spend with their children, makes a positive difference for children in school. For example, more frequent engagement on behalf of parents can significantly decrease chronic absenteeism, which is a behavior that can affect school and academic development (Sheldon & Jung, 2015). When parents communicate frequently with their children regarding schoolwork, it increases students' positive classroom behaviors and positive peer interactions (Thompson & Mazer, 2012). Decreases in parental involvement can increase the frequency of externalizing behaviors, especially for elementary age children (Sheridan et al., 2014).

Children's performance in school is also related to changes in the roles and responsibilities of parents. For example, in situations where mothers change the amount of involvement in caregiving and are employed part time (rather than unemployed) during the students' early childhood development, students reported grade changes as well. Where there is evidence such as this for the different influences that mothers' and fathers' presence in the home

have, it is important that we look at the differences in research on both mothers and fathers and the influences of their roles in households independently.

Father Influence on Behavior. Research indicates father involvement predicts a reduced probability of engagement in risky behaviors among adolescence and that two-way interaction models make this especially true for father and son relationships (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2006). Additional research into this topic indicated that father presence and involvement are associated with not only child externalizing behaviors, but child internalizing behavioral problems as well. Children whose fathers interact more frequently with them are less likely to exhibit internalizing behaviors (Dubeau et al., 2013). The greater the quality of the relationship between the fathers and their children, meaning positive mutual attitudes, the fewer externalizing and internalizing problems as well (King & Sobolewski, 2006).

In addition, children engage in less antisocial behaviors when fathers are more frequently involved in the well-being and support of their children (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003). These antisocial behaviors include lack of empathy, disregard for authority, aggression or conduct problems, manipulation of peers, etc. Children, when deprived of father involvement, are also more likely to perform lower in school, struggle with forming relationships, and demonstrate increasingly irresponsible behavior (McBride et al., 2005). When we look at mothers' influence individually, we can further understand the differences in parental involvement.

Mother Influence on Behavior. Mothers also play a role in the behavior factors and experiences of their children. Additional research has shown a positive correlation between attachment and mother-child relationships and students' achievement goal orientations (Maltais et al., 2015). This is how an individual interprets and reacts to different tasks and changes not only academic achievement but also resulting behavior. In other words, how individuals adjust

and react to different tasks is often correlated with degree of relationship with mothers. What mother influence looks like in the home has some effect on children's resulting behaviors as well.

As mothers' desire and involvement in reading and homework increases grades, it also correlates with a decrease in behavioral problems in school (Zick et al., 2001). Students who have greater relationships with their mothers often exhibit fewer avoidance behaviors such as trying to escape work, social interaction, or school activities. Conversely, mothers who are less involved in the management and childcare in the home perceive their children as demonstrating more externalizing behavioral problems (Dubeau et al., 2013). As mother involvement in the home changes, so too does children's school experiences.

It is clear by going through the different aspects of children's school experience and their parents' potential influences within those aspects, that parents play a huge role in their children's lives. There are so many ways that a child can be affected by the roles of parental figures, so it is central to this research that those differing roles are investigated. This review of the research so far has served as a guide for understanding those roles as well as the aspects of school experience and their connection to parent dynamics. However, it is also essential to understand the current research on SAHDs specifically, as there continues to be shifts in family dynamics. In order to understand more about the perspectives of mothers and fathers on their children's school experience within this particular family dynamic, it is important to first learn what information is available on SAHDs and the research so far on their experience.

Stay-at-Home Fathers

Despite the abundance of research currently available on the effects that parents and their assumed roles have on their children, there is very limited data available on SAHDs specifically.

Researchers have found that in many cases there is a connection between a mother's economic contributions to the family and father engagement with their children (Raley et al., 2012). Simply stated, as a mother's presence in the home decreases due to increase opportunity in the work field, father care is more likely to increase (Raley et al., 2012). There are a few common areas of research concerning SAHDs. Literature first looks at the differing roles of fathers, and then explores such issues as identity and role construction, role conflict, and perceptions or barriers faced by SAHDs. Each of the areas are key to understand if we are to look at SAHDs and their perceptions of their influence on children's school experience.

Differing Roles of Fathers

The role of a father has had numerous definitions throughout society's history. Fathers have become increasingly involved in their children's lives, shifting more attention to child welfare rather than predominantly focusing on the role of financial provider (Shidlov-Cohen, 2004). Moreover, the definition of father expanded to include several variants, including biological father, foster or adoptive father, stepfather, co-parent, primary caregiver, custodial, non-custodial, resident, non-resident, or near and far based on proximity (Coleman et al., 2004). These multiple terms allow for broad inclusivity, with more specific description of fathers' roles depending on individual circumstances.

Different circumstances in which fathers take on the role of the primary caregivers in the home, or the explanations behind that chosen role, can provide insight into this population. Although the related contexts can be complex, research on SAHDs has sometimes focused on only one specific circumstance at a time. For example, one circumstance in which fathers are the primary caregivers in the home is when they have committed past felonies. This specific population of SAHDs may involve different variables than SAHDs of other circumstances

(McDowell, 2011). Other possible explanations include economic reasons, health related issues, personal preference, parenting values, and social change (Medved, 2016; Rochlen et al., 2010; Rochlen et al., 2008). Therefore, variability in perspective should be accounted for when researching SAHDs.

Differing roles fathers can take upon themselves are not only influenced by their circumstance, but also by the various responsibilities within their family. This includes the amount of caregiving they take on, what kind of housework they are involved in, and how much responsibility they have over household duties (Latshaw, 2010; Shidlov-Cohen, 2004). In exploring these differing roles, researchers have also considered how SAHDs construct their roles and define themselves.

Role Construction

Role construction is another common area of research into fathers as stay-at-home parents, and how fathers define their roles also may contribute to the influence that role has on their children. Some scholars have looked at how SAHDs construct their masculinity, and whether or not this construction is determined by decisions of division of household labor (Snitker, 2016). Other researchers have found that often SAHDs' attitudes and masculine identities will change and adjust as they adjust to their more nontraditional role (Lee & Lee, 2018). Fathers' overall emotional connectedness and regard for caregiving increases as they take on roles as stay-at-home parents. More SAHDs reported incorporating both masculine and feminine characteristics to develop a new masculine identity that can support their roles as stay-at-home parents. Construction of their role as fathers is also affected by social location and congruent identities (Snitker, 2016). Furthermore, information from large networks of fathers, such as the National at Home Dad Network, suggests that construction of fathering can be

developed and solidified using institutional discourse, meaning it can be defined systemically (Steinour, 2015). This means that bigger networks reveal that the gender roles within a culture or society are highly influential when defining the identity of SAHDs (Mattila, 2016).

In a similar fashion, consideration into the literature establishes the marketing realm as another lens for articulating the identity of SAHDs. Various forms of media can affect how SAHDs view of themselves and may contribute to other's perspectives about SAHDs (Coskuner-Balli, 2008). Fathers who are fulltime caregivers may have other areas that effect the construction of their identity and in certain environments this can create conflict associated with their roles.

Role Conflict

Further examination into SAHDs revealed the possibility of resulting gender role conflict in the home (Fitch, 2003). Frequently, SAHDs feel like they need to meet role expectations of being the primary caregiver that do not necessarily match up with their own characteristics. For example, these role discrepancies may occur when fathers try to live up to societal expectations, such as those regarding masculinity, but cannot meet those expectations due to personality traits, such as emotional expressiveness and openness (Drake, 2016). A SAHD may be expected to create lasting and meaningful relationships, but emotional connection may not be within societies' definitions of masculinity, thus creating a conflict between expectation and reality. Another clear example of role conflict relevant to SAHDs is when societal expectations and culture says fathers are to be the primary monetary providers for family, but a father's personality and situation may be better suited for work in the home as the primary care provider. Fathers struggle to balance these seemingly incompatible roles. And because of the social nature

of identity construction, roles that appear in conflict with one another can result in negative labeling from other people (Mattila, 2016).

Labels created from social dynamics can often be negative and sometimes lead to stereotypes. Because society has preconceived notions about the social norms surrounding gender roles, one common stereotype of SAHDs is "The Pervert of the Playground" (Mattila, 2016). This stereotype is often heard when fathers attempt to bring their children to local playgrounds or neighborhoods. Other common labels are playground lurker, creep, outsider, and flirt. Such labels are created when society assumes two separate roles are incapable of coexisting, which assumptions can be extremely detrimental to fathers. In addition to these labels, SAHDs often face judgment and negative responses within parenting circles as well. Men and women who adhere and identify with traditional gender roles in society frequently question SAHD family dynamics and view SAHDs with confusion (Drake, 2016). This can contribute to stay-at-home fathers' feelings of isolation and loneliness. Unfortunately, there are additional obstacles besides those inherent within role conflict that SAHDs sometimes come up against.

Common Obstacles for Stay-at-Home Fathers

In order to understand the perceptions of mothers and fathers in SAHD families, we must also understand the common obstacles relevant to SAHD lives as these ultimately can create moderating factors in children's school experience. One common obstacle is stress. Research has examined the stress levels among SAHDs and compared it to that of fathers in the workplace (White, 2013). SAHDs' perceptions about stress indicated extreme difficulty in finding a balance between their family responsibility and meaningful leisure activity due to the increase in time allocated to their children (Hall, 2004). In the past, where more fathers have worked outside of the home and have experienced more traditional dynamics, spending time with children during

intervals within the home was viewed more frequently as leisure and an opportunity to gain attachment with children. For SAHDs the definition of leisure separates itself from their children and becomes more about finding time for oneself. These dynamics in parental stress and changes that come from shifting roles may have resulting implications for children.

Other emotional obstacles SAHD report facing include isolation and self-doubt (Scott, 2011). People frequently doubt their ability to parent, and this is not different among SAHDs. Repeatedly, others will approach fathers in public and offer them help with their kids in a manner that suggests that they don't trust the fathers' capacity. In another study of the barriers or challenges SAHDs face, common obstacles included societal attitudes, gender stereotypes, social isolation, and sometimes personal dissatisfaction (Bailey-Dick, 2002). Social isolation and the reaction from others are often a huge obstacle for SAHDs (Lee & Lee, 2018).

Research that has specifically focused on the experiences of SAHDs in schools indicated that SAHDs still often feel like outcasts in school settings (Jones, 2020). The sentiment of most SAHDs was that they would often describe themselves as "foreigners" when attending parent groups and are placed outside the ranks of other parents who are usually moms. One father within this study described the groups as "closed mum groups" and emphasized just how difficult it can be to integrate oneself into a setting not usually occupied by men. It was determined that the isolation they felt was unique to SAHDs because of their gender, rather then it being a common experience among all primary caregivers (Jones, 2020). Understanding these obstacles allows for a richer narrative regarding the experiences of fathers as stay-at-home parents. However, there is still more research that needs to be conducted in order to comprehend the extent of effects SAHDs may have on the experiences of their children.

Continuing the Narrative

What else is there to be learned from the experiences of SAHDs, and how can we develop research in those areas? A large amount of the current research on fathers as primary caregivers relies on the narratives and perspectives of fathers themselves. One study in particular used unstructured interviews to look at the diverse experiences of SAHDs (Drake, 2015). By following a small sample of SAHDs, the researcher was able to gather deeper insight into their lived experiences and understand their point of view regarding their identities, obstacles, and aspirations. However, this research does not gather their point of view regarding their thoughts on their children's lives, nor does it take into account mothers. The researcher specifies the need for future research regarding the narratives of SAHDs' partners and children (Drake, 2015). This example also stresses the use of qualitative interviews as a useful method when exploring research in its first stages of development.

My study hopes to build on what was discovered in past research and gain additional perspectives of SAHDs using these methods. Because there has not been a wide range of research done to look at the influences of SAHDs, there is still so much we can learn about their stories and experiences. One area that is lacking from the research thus far is a greater understanding of how SAHDs impact their children's school experiences in ways that are distinct from fathers who work full time outside the home and from mothers who are primary caregivers. There is also a lack of insight on mothers' perspectives on SAHDs. These women's stories and experiences are a valuable part in what makes this proposed thesis research a unique contribution to the literature.

Past research has narrowed the definition of SAHDs to very specific circumstances using different qualification parameters for fathers being the primary caregiver in the home (Bailey-

Dick, 2002). It is important to recognize that there are various circumstances in which fathers are the primary caregivers in the home, because each differing circumstance could have distinct implications for a family. Fathers can take on this role due to personal preference, unemployment, health, financial situation, etc. This study takes into account a number of differing circumstances and provides a number of explanations for why a father is the primary caregiver.

This research may have a number of implications within society. Social and educational policies and practices should change according to what we learn about different family dynamics (De Carvalho, 2000; Reay & Ball, 1998; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Because of these various effects, this research looks to fill the gap in current knowledge about SAHDs by finding out their perceptions of their role in their children's school experience, as well as the perceptions of mothers within these households.

CHAPTER 3

Method

The methodology used to guide and inform this study was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis or IPA. IPA is used to "explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world" (Smith & Osborn, 2004, p 53). It looks at what meanings are derived for individuals in regard to their experiences or current states and is a method of examining an "individual's personal perception or account of an object or event, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself" (p. 53). In this study I sought to learn from the experiences of SAHDs and also the children's mothers with respect to their children's schooling. Conceptually, this project was pragmatic, not based on any one psychological or parenting theory.

This study had two stages of interpretation in that participants first expressed their views about their own experiences relevant to their child's schooling, followed by the researcher conveying her understanding of the participants' descriptions. This two-staged format aligned well with the nature of the interpretative process within IPA. IPA also utilizes semi-structured interviews to gather data regarding the research questions. The aim was to gain information through an interactive process in which the researcher attempted to enter the world of participants and gain their perspective.

Participants

The participants in this study included six men who identified as SAHDs and six women who were the mothers in those families. In order to limit any secondary source of bias (e.g., homophobia, discrimination) and not mix any confounding variables, participating couples for the purpose of this research were heterosexual. This research focused explicitly on married

heterosexual couples over the age of 18. Participants were all between the ages of 30-55. All families lived in middle class suburban areas with one or both parents having attainted a bachelor's degree or higher level of education. Each couple had between 2-5 children, with 1-3 children in elementary school. All individuals were Caucasian or White and all residents of the state of Utah. Certain elements about the location and culture of Utah must also be considered when gathering meaning from the results. Various cultures and beliefs in Utah tend to have more conservative political ideologies as well as a greater tendency towards religiosity. It should be noted that every participant identified as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a Christian religious sect that may also contribute to the culture and perspectives of each participant. Because of the homogeneity of participants and the limited demographic range, this sample should not be considered a comprehensive representation of all SAHDs and their spouses, but rather an insight into the experiences of this particular sample with possible links to similar populations.

Additional specific inclusion criteria for participants were (a) fathers needed to spend approximately 20 hours or more of their time in the home Monday to Friday before and after school (during the hours of 7 am to 9 am and after 2:30 pm), (b) at least one child in the home attended grades 1 to 8 in a public school during the entire 2018-19 year (approximately ages 6-13), and (c) mothers needed to reside in the home but work outside of the home and to have also indicated that the father is the primary caregiver for their children determined by a recruitment questionnaire that the couples filled out individually prior to interviewing.

Participants were sought using the snowballing method, through referrals made by initial participants to their known peers, social media solicitations, as well as through online forums specific to SAHDs. Initial participants were found using the researcher's network of associates

and their familiarity with stay-at-home fathers. IPA does not prescribe a set number of participants for each study. It was essential that the sample allowed for "sufficient in-depth engagement with each individual case" (p. 57) but also allowed for "a detailed examination of similarity and difference" (Smith & Osborn, 2004, p 57). This required that sample size not be too large that it would prevent in-depth and thorough analysis, but not too small that breadth of the population be sacrificed.

Procedure

The following procedures were used to ensure sufficient data collection and analyses and to appropriately highlight the breadth and depth of the perceptions of fathers and mothers in homes where the father is the primary caregiver. The researcher obtained approval from an institutional review board (IRB) prior to commencing the study (see Appendix A). Participants were then recruited using researcher network. Following recruitment, SAHDs and their spouses were contacted via email and asked to participate in a preliminary electronic questionnaire to provide basic demographic data (see Appendix B). This questionnaire was completed individually and was used as part of the selection process as certain criteria had to be met in order to qualify for interviews. It also included implied consent and explained risks, procedures, and relevant information about the study.

Research used semi-structured interviews guided by IPA. Thus, the interviews focused on the interpretations and perspectives of the participants with an attempt to elicit rich descriptions. There were 12 separate interviews as SAHDs and their spouses were interviewed individually. Interviews were originally intended to be conducted in person, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic alternative means of communication were used. Zoom, Google Hangouts, and other means of telecommunication and video conferencing were used to gain participants responses as

well as capture nonverbal expression and gestures. The interviews were characterized by a conversational tone to promote authenticity of responses, but an interview guide was used to ask questions that aligned with overall research questions (see Appendix C). This list of 12 questions was also created to decrease the likelihood of asking leading questions during the interview. The intent was to have the 12 questions guide the conversation while not restricting any of the participants' responses to only the topics raised by the interviewer. Prior to participating in the interviews, participants completed a statement of informed consent (see Appendix D). These interviews ranged 40-90 minutes in length.

Participants' responses during these interviews were audio recorded on two sources to prevent possible data loss. Recordings were transcribed without omitting any content. Recordings will all be deleted after this thesis has been completed. The researcher wrote memos following each interview to record dynamics and aspects of responses that would not necessarily be represented on the audio recording, including clarifications of meanings (e.g., sarcasm, emotional expressions such as sorrowful tears or joyful smiles that would not appear on the audio). The researcher's memos, and transcriptions of interviews will be deleted and destroyed following the successful completion of the thesis as well.

Data Analysis

Completed interviews were analyzed in accordance with the IPA, which ensured that analysis focused on understandings individual's world meanings. It was important to become familiar with the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review said themes, and then define and emphasize themes within a report of the results (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Once data were collected by means of open-ended dialogue in the research interviews, the concepts and experiences described by participants were first transcribed and then frequent

"sustained engagement" with the text was necessary to begin interpretation (Smith & Osborn, 2004). From the transcriptions the researcher looked for anything interesting or seemingly significant in the responses as part of their initial notes. Each interview transcript was analyzed multiple times using open-coding and in-depth data readings until saturation was reached. The researcher then distilled participants' information into key codes (meaning units) while remaining true to participants' experiences and perspectives. Essential to IPA is that the generated codes emerge from the collected data rather than from preexisting theory (Smith & Osborn, 2004). These codes were any patterns or responses that emerged from the transcripts, similar responses are given the same code. Brief descriptions of identified possible codes that emerged from the initial review were then created. Multiple reviews of the data ensured comprehensive coverage of the participants' responses and allowed the researcher to note codes that were particularly salient and/or reflected strongly the participant's perspective. This process was done for each of the interviews.

From this data, the researcher then analyzed generated codes to check for reoccurring patterns across responses. Connecting themes were identified and organized. By comparing across transcripts and responses, converging or diverging ideas and perspectives were recognized. Throughout this process main themes versus subordinate themes were highlighted and those that were essential in the understanding of participant's perspectives were illuminated. Specific steps for interpretation of the collected interviews are described as follows:

1. An unfocused overview of the interviews was conducted first. This incorporated every bit of information and text gathered, including transcripts and field notes, in order to become increasingly familiar with every participant and point of view.

2. A second round of review identified and determined emergent codes, units of meaning that appeared within each interview. These codes remained authentic to the experiences and perspectives conveyed by the interviewees.

3. Any themes or relevant processes found in the text across different interviews were identified. Deep and thorough examination of the material was used by refining these themes and their associated descriptions, along with exemplary quotations.

4. The major themes and findings were presented to original participants (member check) and external evaluators. Theme wording and descriptions was redefined based on those multiple sources of feedback.

5. Main themes were then translated into a narrative, interpreted, and discussed, both with participants and peer reviewers, in accordance with the research questions. Both cross case and within case analysis was used. In-depth exploration of individuals' perspectives were viewed on a case by case basis as well as the similarities and differences across participants.

Research Quality

In her article "Considering Quality in Qualitative Interviewing," Kathryn Roulston (2010) highlights essential elements to be included in qualitative research to guarantee and increase the validity and quality of research interviews and analysis. Her research summarizes the following as essential elements in the literature on quality in interviewing and analysis: (a) the methods of asking interview questions, (b) how studies are designed and directed, (c) how interviews are conducted "with attention to theoretical assumptions about how knowledge is produced in interviews" (2010).

In order to achieve higher level of quality within this research, the same elements were included as part of the research design. Different approaches mentioned by Roulston and incorporated within this research included conducting interviews with multiple individuals, researcher awareness of personal values and beliefs and how they shape analysis or generation of data, researcher sensitivity to specific topics and the need to investigate particular subjects, and researcher ability to process and examine transparently in reports (Roulston, 2010). In particular, the researcher remained sensitive to how their individual values, expectations, and experiences shaped data interpretation. This was managed during debrief sessions with peers and coworkers within the professional setting where the researcher could share personal experiences and emotional reactions to participant accounts while maintaining confidentiality (Davis et al., 2019). Self-introspection was conducted throughout the course of the research, including after the interviews and during interpretation. The researcher used critical peers and interview notes to analyze how their own perspectives informed the interpretation of the data collected and understandings. By working through self-reflection, the researcher increased the quality of data interpretation and promoted perspective-taking in order to view the participant data from multiple viewpoints.

In addition to interpretation, quality of accessibility was also addressed through ensuring detailed description of themes and ensuring that the interpretation accounted for and considered the research literature. How many participants contributed to each theme was also recorded and noted as evidence of the similarities and differences in participant responses. Direct excerpts of the participants' responses were used in the results to support themes and demonstrate direct representation of participant perspective.

Peer debriefing is also a standard procedure used that ensures a peer, who is not involved in the research project, aids in providing constructive feedback on the data analysis and interpretation (Hadi & Closs, 2016). This involved probing the researchers rational and process within all steps of the project. The purpose of these peer debriefers was to provide an opportunity for the researcher to consult with a colleague outside the project to give additional validity to the interpretation and "minimize the effects of reactivity and bias" (Lietz et al., 2006, p. 451). Two peer debriefers were selected to assist in this portion of the analysis. Each peer was given all deidentified documentation and materials involved with the project including methodology, procedures, transcripts, interview notes, analysis, and initial findings. Then by attending to each and spending time with the material themselves, peer debriefers compiled feedback from a neutral standpoint while also checking for potential interpreter bias. This included any questions about the process and interpretation, clarity of themes, potential need for editing, or specific strengths and weaknesses of the project. The researcher met with each peer to review all feedback and then made appropriate changes and adjustments to the analysis.

Use of an audit trail allowed for more validity as well. Participants were allowed to view, and were encouraged to inquire about, the researcher's interpretations to ensure their opinions and statements were being represented correctly. This practice is called member checking and ensures that the information gathered from interviews appropriately captures the perspectives and narratives that mothers and fathers intended to convey. The inclusion of member checks increases dependability and credibility (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Participants viewed initial results from a data analysis document and provided feedback and comments on the differing themes and interpretations of the interviews. Participants met once more with the researcher via phone or

video conference to review this feedback and discuss any additional comments, opinions, differences in meaning, or nuances in the interpretation.

An external auditor was also used to challenge the process and findings of the research study and therefore increase the quality and trustworthiness of the project. The purpose of the external auditor was to attest the dependability and quality of research by reviewing and assessing whether the results were concluded accurately based on the data (Miller, 1997). This individual, not involved with the project in any way, represented a neutral position without prior notions or perspectives. The external auditor for this project examined both the process and the products of this research by also having access to the deidentified documents and materials. The auditor began by first orienting themselves to the project and "negotiating with the auditee about the aim of the audit and the procedure to be followed" (Admiraal et al., 2008, p. 262). Once both reached an understanding of the purpose and goals of the audit, additional steps of the audit took place, and the auditor used the documentation to become familiar with the relevant information to the project. The external auditor determined that the data was collected efficiently and was well-organized. They also supported that the procedures used during the project were followed and were appropriate for reaching the studies main objectives. In addition, they verified that procedures were used correctly in determining appropriate and logical interpretations. These multiple layers of review were intended to improve the credibility of data interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was provided for all participants within the study. To mitigate possible risks and parent discomfort, the researcher instructed participants that they may choose not to answer any questions if they wish and the option to withdraw was always upheld. Additional procedures were used to maintain the safety and privacy of participants.

Although it was originally intended that interviews would be conducted face-to-face (at a private/distraction-free location specified by the participants), many participants expressed a preference for privacy and safety due to the COVID-19 pandemic that made remote interviews more feasible and realistic. Each interview was conducted via Zoom or Google Meetings (both methods for remote face-to-face contact) to ensure the safety and well-being of all persons involved, as well as follow CDC protocols and safety regulations. Interviews with each parent was conducted without the other parent being within reasonable hearing range as to address privacy and confidentiality concerns.

All recordings, memos, and transcriptions used during the course of this research were kept confidential in a locked residence on a computer that was password protected. Each will be deleted and destroyed following the successful completion of the thesis.

CHAPTER 4

Results

To address a gap in the school psychology literature, the primary objective of this study was to better understand the perspectives of mothers and fathers regarding their children's school experiences when the father remains home and the mother works outside the home. As mentioned before, we sought the perspectives of both fathers and mothers since those perspectives likely interact in many ways and can provide a clearer perspective when considered together. Throughout the course of the interviews, parents would often relate subjects back to how their own lives had been affected rather than the lives of their children. Although parents spoke on their children's school experiences at times, a large portion of what they wanted to convey focused on the obstacles and variables relevant to their own experiences instead. In speaking with parents, there was a lot more information they wanted to share about their roles and experiences than was originally anticipated and not as much about their children, which was important to note during the implications and interpretation of results as well. These families had a lot they wanted to share with the researcher.

Based on the interviews conducted and subsequent data analysis, common themes were determined for (a) the SAHDs, (b) the mothers, and (c) the patterns observed when comparing fathers' and mothers' responses. The qualitative results of this project and descriptions of each theme are presented in this section, along with quotes that illustrate the direct experiences and perceptions of parents. Numbers were assigned to each SAHD and spouse to protect the confidentiality of each participant.

Main Themes Discovered Among Mothers

The first research question in this thesis was, "What are the mother's perceptions of how their children's school experiences (including academic, social, emotional, and behavioral components) are affected by having the father as their primary caregiver?" To address this research question in the interviews, the researcher analyzed interview responses based on established methodology described in chapter 3. Several themes emerged among the spouses of SAHDs that directly responded to the research question. Main themes that emerged from mothers' responses are described here first, followed by additional themes and topics brought up by mothers.

Main Theme 1- Mothers Commonly Reported Children had Fewer Opportunities for Peer Social Interactions When Their Father is the Stay-at-Home Parent

Throughout the course of interviewing, mothers shared several insights into their children's social interactions in the school setting. When talking about the social aspects of their children's school experiences, mothers commonly reported that their children had received fewer peer social opportunities when their fathers were the stay-at-home parents. One mother, in talking about her children's social interactions shared her perspective in saying:

> I think maybe they [our children] weren't as social as they may have been if I had been a stay-at-home mom and I was like, "hey guys, let's go to the park now, let's go..." I mean like we would do those things in the summer but during the school year I was like, "oh, let's just chill here at the house I'm tired," you know? I don't think they were as social as they could have been or maybe should have been (Spouse 2).

This decrease in social interactions was a common topic among both SAHDs and their spouses; however, more commonly the mothers identified specific limitations to their children's social

interactions. Mothers felt that their husbands had lower expectations for their children's social interactions or faced more obstacles in networking and socializing with parents of other children (usually mothers). Spouse 3 clarified this notion by affirming:

> They [our children] were probably more isolated than other kids, purely because it was hard for us as parents to connect with other parents and for [SAHD] to connect with other parents, because they are just expecting me to when I wasn't doing that because I was working (Spouse 3).

Because of the different experiences of SAHDs versus their spouses, similar to others interviewed, this mother felt that her children's social interactions were indeed adversely affected by differences between SAHDs and the mother. In general mothers felt that because they were the working parent and had limited availability to help encourage social interaction or help connect with other parents to support social interaction, this decreased those experiences for their children.

Main Theme 2- Mothers Reported Strengthened Relationships Between SAHDs and Their Children

Recurrently throughout the course of the interviews, mothers conveyed their perspective regarding their children having stronger bonds than they would have otherwise had with the SAHD and a corresponding greater degree of involvement of the father in school settings. Commonly, mothers observed that SAHDs and their children engaged more about both educational and emotional topics. Spouse 4 specifically mentioned the changes to the connection between SAHDs and their children when she stated:

> Oh! Honestly, I feel like it's only been a positive thing, because where most kids only go to mom for a lot of things, it's really enhanced the relationship with dad. And I feel like

it's become more balanced in our family. Where it has opened up a lot of relationships

for the other kids to connect to him on a deeper level (Spouse 4).

The bond between SAHDs and their children are closer because of increased time spent in the

home and involvement of fathers in home and school responsibilities. Mothers also reported

deeper and more stable, consistent relationships strengthened through the additional time spent

together. Time as a factor alone was a great enough change in dynamic to make a difference in

the relationship between children and their fathers according to Spouse 3 who indicated:

I think that they're definitely closer to [SAHD] then they would have been otherwise.

Just because of the sheer amount of time that they spend together. And I think they are

probably less close to me than otherwise, again because of the sheer amount of time… I

feel like if the situation were flipped, I probably would have more time with them, and

our relationship might be a little bit stronger for it (Spouse 3).

This mother felt that by simply spending time in proximity with children rather than dedicating

that time someplace else, such as work, those relationships can grow closer, no matter which

parent. That increased time and availability increased the stability of the relationship between

SAHDs and their children. According to Spouse 6, not only do kids spend more time with and

have greater connection to their fathers than they would have otherwise, but they also have an

increase in steadiness and reliability with their fathers because of the family dynamic.

I think it gives my kids a steadiness to have dad there. I think it... kind of like I was

saying before with social-cultural; I think it strengthens the relationship my husband and

son have (Spouse 6).

Because of the way their families have adjusted their dynamic, mothers felt it has left lasting

results on the relationship their children have with their fathers. Mothers' experiences with this

aspect of their families and their notions about these relationships came up multiple times during the interviews. They spoke on improvement to relationships between SAHDs and children when thinking about the advantages and benefits of their family dynamic, in thinking about the social interactions and experiences of their children, in contemplating the emotional outcomes and variations for their children, as well as the general impact that the changes to their family dynamic have had on their children's schooling.

Additional Themes Mentioned by Mothers

In addition to the more salient main themes discovered when conversing with mothers, further themes and responses common among mothers are discussed in this section. These additional themes include responses common among mothers, but not brought up by all mothers within the study. Mothers had a lot to say and their experiences were important in both answering the questions set forth in this research as well as to understand their perspectives and explore how these mothers made sense of their world. There were a number of topics that came up that were true to their experiences as mothers in these family dynamics and their thoughts on their children's resulting experiences.

Minor Theme 1- Some Mothers Shared the Guilt They Felt for not Being as Involved in Schooling as the Stay-at-Home Parent in the Family

When asked their perspective about their family dynamic, some mothers expressed feeling guilty at times for not being more present in the home. Spouse 2 eloquently expressed this feeling by stating:

> Sometimes I felt guilty. Like I'm a mom I should be at home, and you know what I mean, and dad should be at work. So, that was a disadvantage. I feel like it's getting less and less but people were like, "oh, you're career driven, you don't want to be with your

family" but with the population that we live in, and maybe it was just my perspective that

I feel like that sometimes (Spouse 2).

Mothers felt that the cultural expectations surrounding their circumstances are for moms to be in the home. Therefore, by not being as involved in the child's schooling, they felt guilty. Because of the population she lives in and her experiences with how people have responded to her working, Spouse 2 expressed feeling guilty often because she has a role in her family that is different from most of the other mothers around her. This notion among mothers came up most commonly when they spoke about the possible disadvantages and negatives effects of having a SAHD in the home and how it relates to their children's school experiences. Opposite of their beliefs about the increased relationship their kids have with their fathers, mothers felt guilty for not having that same increased relationship, and for not giving their kids the same opportunity to develop a relationship with them.

Minor Theme 2- Mothers Recognized the Resulting Loneliness from Having Nontraditional Roles in the Home

The subject of loneliness and isolation was brought up by some mothers. By having more nontraditional roles that correspond less with the surrounding social norms, both mothers and fathers feel isolated and alone in their roles. Mothers recognize the loneliness that can come from being a SAHD when most of the stay-at-home parents around them are mothers, while simultaneously recognizing how lonely it can be as a working mother when most breadwinners around you are men. One mother in particular exemplified what this feels like by using a story to depict the experience:

[SAHD] went through many years that were just really lonely. Like I remember one time, like [SAHD] would try to do playdates, right? And there was one time where the women

in the neighborhood were like, and they were nice too and were trying to invite him, or

whatever, but they went to [Location] park for a playdate and [SAHD] went and they

were just (laughing), they were all in their swimsuits and [SAHD] just felt kind of

awkward, you know? Cause he's just like the only guy there literally, and they're all just

talking about women things, and it's just... it's just hard to identify and it's just lonely

and so anyway. That stands out as something that's difficult. Same goes for me too… I

don't feel like there is a community of women that I could talk to that actually, that really

understand what I'm talking about. In church, if I ever talk about work, I can tell some

people bristle a little bit, because there's a defensiveness there... Yeah, for some stay-at-

home moms, they just feel like, like the mere fact that I'm bringing it up makes them feel

like somehow, I'm judging them for not working, which I'm totally not but for some

reason there's like this weird awkward like, you know, dynamic I suppose (Spouse 3).

By sharing these experiences with the researcher, Spouse 3 brought to light and succinctly

illustrated how both fathers and mothers feel sometimes because of the differences in their

family dynamic and involvement with their children. According to mothers, when these roles

clash with what is considered socially normal within the area, it becomes harder and harder to

identify with other families or other fathers and mothers. Because of the unique aspects of their

family dynamic compared to the surrounding society, there is more opportunity for individuals

taking on nontraditional roles and their children to experience isolation and loneliness. Mothers

expressed that in trying to participate in activities and talk with other mothers and fathers,

parents in SAHD family dynamics have more difficulty relating and connecting with parents of

more traditional households.

Minor Theme 3- Some Mothers Brought up the Importance of Teaching and Helping

Children Understand Their Family Dynamic and Perspective

Some mothers brought up the element of how important it can be to teach children to understand their own family dynamic and the influence teaching perspective can have on children's experiences. One mother explained the impact that teaching perspective can have by saying:

> Sometimes you kind of just have to keep it in perspective for the kids too, because our society and our culture really teaches us that things really need to be a certain way, and kids are often weighing what's going on with them against their neighbors… and it's a completely different dynamic for us for so many reasons then a lot of that (Spouse 4).

When the societal norms do differ from how you allocate family responsibility and roles, it can potentially cause children confusion or reluctance. This same mother goes on to give a specific example of what this may look like for children:

> I think just when… I'm thinking about me leaving sometimes and [SAHD] just keeping it in perspective for [Child] like "Okay, she's only going to be gone for a couple hours then she'll pick you up from school." If she happens to be having a hard time in those moments of like "Hey, I'm leaving" even though she's going to school in 30 minutes anyway um… just trying to make it better and say "Hey, I'm not going to be able to drop you off today, but I'll definitely pick you up" (Spouse 4).

In describing a personal situation specifically, this mother is able to represent what keeping the perspective for children will look like daily. This experience, along with others also made by mothers, indicates that their children may not always understand and may not feel confident with their home situation if they do not recognize or understand the reasons for their own household

arrangement. According to mothers, parents can work together to provide helpful perspectives for their kids when most families around them differ in terms of parenting arrangements.

Minor Theme 4- Mothers Commonly Feel that Female Children's Social Interaction with Boys has Increased Because the Stay-at-Home Parent is Male

When asked about social interaction specifically, some mothers mentioned their daughters having more friendships and increased comfortableness around boys at school. Mothers often admitted that this could potentially be attributed to the fact that the stay-at-home parent is a male. For example, one mother stated:

> Oh, I know, our youngest is friends with a lot of boys. And I don't know if that's 'cause she was raised by her dad a lot more but yeah I think both of our younger girls are a lot more friends with boys (Spouse 1).

The parent in each of the participants' households is male and therefore mothers felt that the female children in these settings, having been exposed to more to male presence, are more comfortable around male children. Because mothers commented frequently on the increase in relationship between their children and their fathers as previously stated, they also believe that for female children those positive relationships with the male figure in the home have changed their relationships with friends. Another mother simple put it:

> With my daughter, she's very comfortable, but she's also the only girl. But she's very comfortable with like boys and a lot of her friends are boys (Spouse 5).

More of their female children have friends who are specifically male. By being around their fathers more often and by having a greater level of comfort and steadiness with fathers, female children relate more with male children.

This was another topic that mothers brought up when asked about their children's experiences. Mothers talked about a number of things and their experiences have been very insightful in addressing the research questions at hand. In addition to mothers within these families, fathers also were able to share their individual perspectives and beliefs about how their family dynamic has influenced their children's schooling.

Main Themes Discovered Among Fathers

The second question posed in this research was, "What are the father's perceptions of how their children's school experiences (including academic, social, emotional, and behavioral components) are affected by having them as the primary caregiver?" By looking at fathers' responses separately from those of the mothers, we were able to better understand their personal perceptions regarding this topic. We can also take a closer look at how SAHDs make sense of their experiences and how their family dynamic impacts the experiences of their children in the school setting.

Main Theme 1- Fathers' Divergent Beliefs Regarding Children's Emotional Experiences

Fathers' perspectives on their children's emotional experiences were split, with some fathers reporting an increase in their children's emotional learning due to fathers being the primary parent in the home and others reporting negative impact on children's emotional learning. When speaking on emotional experiences specifically, there was a stronger consensus among men that children's emotional experiences are affected by fathers taking on the role as a stay-at-home parent. Commonly fathers expressed that, in their experience, their children's emotional intelligence, mental health, or ability to deal with emotions is influenced by which parent stays at home. One father connected this idea of how his being the stay-at-home parent specifically impacted his children's experiences when he said:

That's actually a really good question. And you know, since I grew up in [European

Country], it's a totally different mentality. I mean, I've never seen my dad cry, I've never

seen my grandma cry, I've never seen my grandpa complain who was always… who was

actually in a World War II camp, so whenever we had something, he's like "dude, don't

complain, you're still alive." That's same with my mentality here with the kids. So,

sometimes my wife is like, "you should be a little more nice," you know? And when they

get hurt, I'm like, "shake it off, keep going, you didn't break anything, you're okay…"

because of me being home more and because of me growing up on the other side of the

world, like the way they show emotions is different than how a lot of kids show emotions

(SAHD 5).

This quote by SAHD 5 demonstrates that because of his background and upbringing, he was

inclined to respond to his children in a different way than his wife would have, and because he

was the parent in the home that is what his children were more exposed to on a daily basis. This

therefore made an impact on their own emotional experiences.

Fathers' perspectives on the emotional learning of their children diverged into two

different perspectives, with some fathers considering their children's emotional intelligence

increased due to their experiences with a SAHD and some expressing a decrease in emotional

intelligence due to the father staying in the home. SAHD 2 felt that the latter was true. When

asked about his children's emotional experiences and reactions, he expressed his perspective and

why he felt his children's experiences were so different by saying:

Definitely, I'm sure my wife would have done it different. She's probably more patient

than me and stuff like that, so I think there's some of those types of things definitely

would have been different (SAHD 2).

Because of his wife's specific character traits that were different from his own, he felt his children would have had different experiences with emotion. As the stay-at-home parent, he did not feel he had the same character strengths and therefore may have limited the emotional learning of his children. Several fathers felt the opposite. They felt that their children's interaction and emotional intelligence had increased because of the parent in the home. One father even stated:

> I would say I'm a little more emotionally intelligent than my wife is, 'cause I've always been kind of sensitive, and like very empathetic towards other people. And then like going through depression myself has taught me a lot of things, and just the struggle with mental health, I think is like even though you struggle with it, it gives you some depth in terms of like how to deal with emotions. So, emotions have always been important to me with our kids (SAHD 3).

Some SAHDs conveyed that these differences in their children's emotional experiences may differ due to the history and experiences of the stay-at-home parent. Several spoke on differences in personality with regards to emotional intelligence and how this affects the emotional experiences and dynamics of their children. No matter where they felt these differences came from, fathers recognized the potential for impacts on their children's emotional experience and intelligence because of which parent stayed at home.

Main Theme 2- Fathers Expressed Challenges Faced when Commonly Viewed Through a Stereotypical Sociocultural Lens

Frequently, fathers reported challenges in their interactions with their children's school and community. Several SAHDs explained that they are often viewed by school personnel and adults through a stereotypical lens. One father spoke on his own perspective with stereotype:

I mean I really think that the stereotype needs to be broken. Having, I… eventually I

foresee that there might even be a stereotype about both your parents don't work being an

issue, but here in Utah it's very much a… everyone expects one of them to be home still.

Even if that, even if the majority of people don't have that, still be a stereotype. And the

stereotype still is the mom's home, um… which there's absolutely no reason it has to be

that way, in our public society (SAHD 3).

This SAHD introduced the challenges and difficulties of overcoming stereotypes in general and

how in his specific location of Utah there are strict categories that place moms as the stay-at-

home parents and dads as the primary breadwinners away from the home. One situation that

stereotypes specifically appeared in the lives of the SAHDs, was when teachers and staff

assumed that dads were the authoritarian or disciplinarian of the family and made assumptions of

their involvement and role based on cultural expectations. SAHD 6 gave specifics into his

perspective when he told this story:

There very much was. [The school staff] were turning to me to be that iron fist, for lack

of better terms, making the decision on "well, what are we going to do about this" in that

situation. And it was… they were all instantly "okay well, are we going to send her to

mom for the comfort" and our family is actually the opposite. I mean she'll break down

for [Spouse] too, but it tends to be that yeah, dads the one there to catch her. And yeah,

the school district, they had already known our situation but… or the administration I

should say, but the district very much was a… they kinda approached me with that

situation and as, well I'm the authoritarian of the family… which is a stereotype (SAHD

6).

This idea came up again when talking about the emotional needs and experiences of their children and differences among parents. SAHDs felt that often others will have established opinions and expectations regarding how responsibilities are divided within families. Here, SAHD 6 mentioned once again his experience with schools, maintaining:

> Teachers would assume that I would be the discipliner, which isn't necessarily the case. I mean I will discipline my daughter, don't get me wrong, but the stereotypical, there's mom and dad and one of them is your comfort and one of them is your warden. It's kind of… our situation is reversed, and that very possibly could be because I'm the one at home and so I have to be emotionally available to both of them whereas [Spouse] can take the logical approach (SAHD 6).

SAHDs expressed that the interactions and responses from schools have felt more inflexible and stereotyped in the way they are treated as compared to their spouses. Other adults have also been wary and more inflexible with SAHDs due to social and cultural expectations and factors. We see in this example how these stereotypes affect emotional situations in schools, but also play a role in community interaction as well:

> After that initial "well this is weird," we tell [our daughter] that all her friends are like "it's just one parent at home, it doesn't matter who it is" there still is that stereotype, stigma of "it's not mom." I know of situations… where people were honestly "oh, you can't go to their house 'cause it's not mom at home, it's dad." I only know of one incident of that ever occurring. Um… but because it happened once, I know it happens. Where people are, well is there a parent home, yes, they don't instantly go "oh its dad home." Yeah, and when they do find out… I know of a situation where it was well "no

you shouldn't go over there" and there's absolutely no reason why there should be a

difference, but some people do (SAHD 6).

Within this example, others not only assumed the parent in the home would be a mother, but

also, once they discovered the stay-at-home parent was a father, made assumptions based on the

stigma of fathers and this ultimately deprived the family from experiences. SAHDS felt more

difficulty in overcoming the assumptions and stereotypes that people have in order to expand

their children's opportunity for interaction and learning. Yet another example of this was

prevalent in the interview with SADH 5 when he revealed:

> There's people that have problems with it. You know, like you always have people who
>
> are stuck in the past. And I think in Utah it's also… you know I remember like, I was in
>
> church once, and it was in [Location]. And it has like the… the stake president made
>
> some comments about you know… the wife should be home and the male should be, you
>
> know (SAHD 5).

Overall, the people and society surrounding these families had specific notions and stereotypes

regarding fathers and mothers and their roles. From the experiences that SAHDs shared, you

could see the expectation, how it affected not only SAHDs, but their children's experiences as

well.

Additional Themes Mentioned by Fathers

Among these main themes from SAHDs, additional responses and themes were

highlighted as well. These responses were not as prominent as the main themes discussed within

this section so far; however, they were frequently discussed among fathers and are therefore

essential in capturing a more holistic perspective on SAHDs' experiences. Here are additional

topics mentioned by fathers that related to the second question proposed in this research.

Minor Theme 1- Some Fathers Spoke About the Difficulty Networking with Other Parents and the Resulting Consequences on Their Children's Social Experiences

Fathers reported that often the lack of social interaction and experiences that their children had with other children at school was attributable to the obstacles that fathers face when being the primary caregiver. In addition to the stereotypes, they often talked about specifically as previously mentioned, there were other obstacles highlighted among fathers as well. These SAHDs had a harder time connecting with a network of stay-at-home parents because of the gender differences and rigid social norms. One SAHD mentioned his ability as a father to coordinate and connect with others when he clearly explained:

> When they were young, I also felt kind of bad, like they would… they didn't have like a lot of kids they would play with, because I wasn't dialed in to that network and stuff. So, I always felt like if [Spouse] was at home they would have known a lot more kids and like had more people come over (SAHD 3).

Mothers spoke on various aspects that contributed to differences in social interaction including parental expectations and values, but SAHDs narrowed their perspective to that occurring because of their limited opportunities for connecting with other parents. For them, their children's experiences in social interaction were limited because of them being fathers as stay-at-home parents, rather than differences in characteristics specifically. Because they were fathers and men this ultimately limited the network of children available to interact with their own children.

Minor Theme 2- Some Fathers Reported Their Children Valued Different Behaviors

SAHDs more specifically addressed the differences in behavior and the experiences their children have had because of the family dynamic. Fathers reported that because they are the

parent that is primarily in the home and because they have different behavior expectations from

their spouses, this has ultimately changed some of their children's behaviors. Fathers explained

that because certain values are dominant in the home and that there are lessons they consider are

more important to teach, their children are taught more frequently to value those lessons instead.

This is demonstrated in this statement by SAHD 5 when he said:

> Oh yeah! All the time… So, since I'm home, you know I'm teaching those values that I
>
> think are important. Like you eat with a fork and a knife. Like, if you go to [friends]
>
> house you don't call his dad [First Name] that's daddy's friend, to you it's Mr. [Last
>
> Name] … like [Spouse] is way more strict with things then when I'm home I'm like
>
> "well that's not that important" you know so, we have different things that maybe women
>
> think, or just with our kids [Spouse] thinks are important (SAHD 5).

Comments from an additional SAHD highlighted that these values that are affecting students are

not only within the realm of mannerisms and behavior traits but also the values stay-at-home

parents place on different activities, such as sports, government, etc. This SAHD expressed:

> Well, I would wonder if my children not being involved as much because their mother
>
> would emphasize being involved more than I do. So, it might have affected that a bit.
>
> Like I guess in student government and things like that and like sports, they are involved
>
> somewhat but I assumed they might have been more involved (SAHD 1).

SAHDs expressed more how they felt about their children's behavior experiences. Few

expressed that because they feel very differently about what behaviors and values are important

to teach, their children have learned differently because they are the stay-at-home parent. The

parent who spends more time in the home, spends more time with the children to teach those

values. SAHDs conveyed the differences in values between them and their spouses and how those variances were a contributing factor in their children's different experiences.

Overall, each of the themes represents a part of what SAHDs had to say and a piece of their world view as it relates to their family dynamic. These themes contribute to answering the second research question specific to fathers. Fathers talked about a number of things and their experiences have been very insightful in addressing the research questions at hand. It was also equally important to evaluate the ways in which mothers' and fathers' perspectives interact with one another to gain a clearer evaluation of the family dynamic. In order to really understand the comprehensive perceptions of both SAHDs and their spouses it was important to compare their responses with one another and discover what themes were predominant among both mothers and fathers.

Main Themes Discovered When Comparing Parents' Responses

Finally, the last question pondered within this research was, "What differences and similarities in beliefs do mothers and fathers have about the role of fathers as primary caregivers and its influence on their children's school experience?" In comparing the responses of parents, we can get a clearer picture of the shared experiences of parents and their collective thoughts on their children's school experiences. Main themes collected through comparison and analysis are described in greater detail here, followed by additional themes and topics discussed by both mothers and fathers.

Main Theme 1- Parents Were Intentional When Developing Roles, Considering Different Factors that Influence Children's School Experiences

The first theme prevalent among parents was that both SAHDs and their spouses explicitly and implicitly explained conscious efforts and thorough considerations about how their

parenting arrangements may influence their children's school experiences. Parents were thoughtful in reflecting on their situations and the consequences of circumstance and choices. For instance, one mother reflected on her family's circumstances and what she considers to be best for her children:

> I just feel like after reflecting about it, I feel like we've taken a situation that maybe, might be a little bit out of our control circumstantially and in those moments and really made it the best for our kids. And often parents really a lot of days go to bed feeling like failures. I think that's pretty normal for any parent regardless of the structure or set up, that's just kind of something that happens that we just do to ourselves, and so I feel like really after I've pondered and reflected like I feel like we've done a really great job (Spouse 4).

Another parent explained their contemplation of lasting results and effects their arrangement has on their children when they said:

> They're all so different you know, all four of them like it's hard with nature versus nurture and stuff but I… gosh… I don't know, I've often thought about that question myself... it's kind of like a grand experiment sometimes (SAHD 3).

These parents among others all indicated their thought and effort in considering as much as possible all the outcomes and differences for their children. In talking with parents further about their views it became apparent that there were a lot of different elements that entered their mind when considering their situation. Parents reported evaluating a number of different factors and how those factors relate with their children's schooling, and parents take into consideration a number of contexts to best support children and fill household roles. Specific contexts reported by parents include frequency of each parental involvement, potential responses from society as it

affects their children's schooling, level of attachment and comfort each child has with each parent, and children's individual personalities and abilities. The contexts parents considered specifically are defined in more detail and explained below.

Context 1- Frequency of Involvement and Division of Parental Roles is One Factor in Which Parental Decisions and Thoughts on Their Children's School Experience Were Based. Parents consciously thought about their division of roles and involvement in home/school activities and how those decisions may affect children's school experiences. The division of responsibilities looked different for every family. Spouse 3 was one example of considering the division of roles as a factor. She mentioned specifically:

> I would say [SAHD] does like the bulk of the coordination. So, like with teachers as well as like... figuring out assignments and things like that. So, my role has been primarily to help with homework like math homework or other homework or like if there's a specific project… And like he'll do the work of coordinating with teachers, emailing back and forth, setting up the parent teacher conferences. And then if I can make it I will, but he goes to all of them. I go to maybe a third of them. Um… and then I will occasionally volunteer in the classroom. Just because I like, if I can, I love to see like where my kids spend most their days and show my face a little bit, make sure the teacher knows that they have parents that love them (SPOUSE 3).

Mothers were not the only ones to talk about division of roles as part of that thought process. SAHDs also frequently expressed division of roles as something they grappled with in thinking about their responsibility and how it might affect children's school experience. SAHD 4 expounded:

The weird thing about our dynamic, it really is almost 50/50. Except for [Spouse] doesn't

like to shop, so I do like 95% of the grocery shopping. That's okay... but as far as the

kid's school goes, we're pretty even on that stuff… I go and do most of her IEPs and

parent teacher conferences… that's never a fun thing, so I do most of that. Other than

that, we do, really it's mostly 50/50 here, I'll talk to teachers and principals or [Spouse]

will talk to teachers and principals, depending on the situation and depending on which

one of us thinks can handle the situation better… We both volunteer all the time at the

kids' elementary school. We both take days where we'll go take lunch with one of the

teenagers, just to go and hangout for the day and eat lunch sometimes. And what's fun

about that is the teenagers call both of us… So, it really is honestly I think 50/50 (SAHD

4).

This statement by SAHD 4 not only depicts parents' thoughtful consideration in dividing their

roles at home, but also indicates the value parents place on the equal division of roles. In

thinking about the division of roles, parents also contemplated gender equity. It was important to

both mothers and fathers to address the respective needs of each parent and try to reconcile their

division of roles in a way that allowed each to participate in responsibilities equally. Parents

placed value in creating an equal marriage where both parents are given fair opportunity to share

in experiences. SAHD 3 demonstrated consideration of equity when he stated:

I've seen a lot of families where, because things are so divided, like this person is the

homemaker and this person is the breadwinner, and getting stuck in these things, and so

one will just have no clue what the others life is like, and the other will have no clue and

that I just feel like there is a disadvantage in that. And I just wish that we would live in a

society where it could just be more… it could be more equal (SAHD 3).

Most parents, including SAHD 3, expressed their hope of creating an equal division of roles that allowed each parent to share the responsibilities in the home. This was another aspect that serves as evidence of parents' profound inspection of role construction. Each of these statements made by parents represents a piece of their contemplation and meditation of roles within the family.

Context 2- Parents Considered the Responses and Reactions from Society and School and Social Networks and Their Effects on Their Children's School Experiences. An additional context of which parents consciously consider when thinking about parental roles and their specific family dynamic is the responses and reactions from their local school and social networks to their elected division of roles. Parents thoughtfully approached and contemplated accepted social norms and defaults and the resulting "weirdness" or specific situations that come from having a family dynamic in which the father is the stay-at-home parent rather than the mother. SAHDs and their spouses responded regarding the effects of societal expectations in different ways, but all parents felt it was something requiring contemplation. Spouse 3 for example, explained the pros and cons of the situation by declaring:

> This goes back to kind of what I was saying earlier about some of the cons of this situation, is that because it's not the default, then society doesn't really support it. And what that means is that it's harder to… like kid's moms will always text me, they'll find my number somehow, and I'm like on a call, I'm working, I'm busy, you know… "Hey we'd love to invite [Child] over for a birthday party," and I'm just kind of like "I can't help you, you know like talk to his dad." And so, there's a lot of kind of like, well then maybe they won't, like maybe they won't text [SAHD], and so it's like well then, I have to follow up with them, because there is this weirdness (Spouse 3).

This is something that both mothers and fathers in these families talked about as affecting their children's school experiences and it was something that each of them mentioned as a definite factor to consider within the family dynamic and when sharing responsibilities.

Context 3- Parents Expressed Thorough Examination of the Communication Needs in the Home as well as the Level of Attachment and Comfort Children Have with Each Parent. Both SAHDs and spouses emphasized the communication and attachment needs of the family as a factor in thinking about their children's school experiences. According to parents, each child's attachment to both parents should be considered when planfully addressing responsibilities in the home, communicating needs, and supporting children as best as they can. One parent gave an example of this when she explained this situation about her daughter and son:

> …she usually wants, she's always looking for me and [male child] is always looking for [SAHD] whether he's home all day with him or not, that's just who he feels most comfortable with, but they'll kind of go through different phases where they'll go back and forth (Spouse 4)

If a child feels more comfortable talking about their emotional struggles or experiences with one parent over the other, then SAHDs and their spouses would communicate those needs and align their roles in a way that best comforts that child.

> If one of them felt like mom wasn't as present or like was gone and they only had dad to bounce things off of, I feel like we've communicated really well in the sense of like "hey, [child] probably really needs to talk to you about something that's coming up for her". And if I wasn't able to be here right in that moment, we would just kind of talk to each other about it and then just realize "okay I need to be extra present right here and feel into

the situation and see what's going on". Because I think in all experiences, I think all kids

need more dad in some experiences and more mom in the other. And feel comfortable

talking about this more so than with one parent. So, I feel like if that's come up, we

communicate with each other (Spouse 4).

In the deliberations parents have with one another and when they ponder the needs of their

family, this is one element that comes up frequently. Parents felt that their children's attachment

and comfort was essential in developing their family dynamic and roles.

Context 4- Parents Thought About Their Children's Personalities and Abilities as a

Factor in Deciding Division of Responsibilities and Effects on Children's School

Experience. Parents consciously thought about their children's individual personalities as a

moderating factor in their children's school experience. Spouse 3 nicely introduced this idea

when she said:

Our kids are probably a bit more organized than they would have been if I had stayed at

home, cause I'm not a very organized person and [SAHD] is much more so. So, they still

kind of struggle with it, but they have different personalities each of them (Spouse 3).

Even in talking about the evidence for change, parents still considered their children's individual

personality, as evidenced in this quote by Spouse 3. She felt that there were potential differences,

but even still recognized her children's personality. Parents have greater perspective into their

children's lives and sometimes have a greater understanding of who their children are than those

who have not experienced the same family dynamics. Parents felt that despite the different ways

they as parents could change their children's experiences, there were still elements of their

children that might remain the same no matter what was taught or who was in the home. One

mother stated this succinctly by saying:

I think my daughter would still be that girl who doesn't stand up for herself the best but

still protects the little kids and my son would still be obsessed with being a hero and

making people laugh (Spouse 6).

This recognizes the individual-based factors that affect world view and experience, and that

parents deeply consider these notions when reflecting on how to best support children.

Specifically, parents highlighted natural social and emotional tendencies, intellectual ability, and

success rate in school as examples of aspects of personality that factor into the family dynamic

and effects on children's school experience.

I don't think it's different at all. I think if she had been the one at home the whole-time

um… it would have been the same. They're all very naturally intelligent, like I don't feel

like we do… reading was like a huge thing for us, like reading was like the most

important thing we both felt really strongly about that (SAHD 3).

Another father demonstrated his specific contemplation through with his children's personality

factors when thinking about his role and how they might come into play when he stated:

I think that's hard to measure, that's really hard to measure, because my oldest son is

doing really well in school, but my second son is totally different personality is not doing

that well in school but has the same experience, you know? With me being home just as

much as with the older one… there's just no data because like I said my oldest son is just

nailing everything and then my second one who is just a totally different personality, also

doesn't like to go to school you know? (SAHD 4).

This comparison of his children's experiences with one another, demonstrates some of that

ongoing contemplation of variables. Parents can gather a greater idea for the role that individual

personality plays in dividing roles and the effects they as parents have on their children's

experiences. This, in addition to the other subthemes mentioned, represent some of the elements that parents consider when they are thinking about their children and their family dynamic. Mothers and fathers with conscious effort consider profusely the variables that may contribute to their children's school experiences.

Main Theme 2- Parents had a Hard Time Thinking of Specific Differences in Their Children's School Experiences that Resulted from Their Parenting Arrangement

Given the effort and forethought put into their parenting arrangements (main theme 1), parents typically felt that they had created buffers and positive experiences for their children, such that they had difficulties subsequently identifying major differences in their children's school experiences. Mothers and fathers separately focused on different aspects of children's school experience and discussed differences based on their perspective; however, when responses from both mothers and fathers were compared, parents overall found it difficult to highlight differences in their children's experience due to their family dynamic. When the researcher posed questions from different angles, parents found it difficult to tease out how their children's experiences could be affected by the family dynamic. One parent gave their honest opinion about finding no significant differences when she said:

> Honestly, I don't think they were affected really, I think that they did well in school and after school I generally helped them, I think that it didn't hurt or hinder or help necessarily. I think they did well because we worked hard with them and they worked hard (Spouse 2).

Even after reflection to questions posed from different angles, several parents reported difficulties identifying differences in experiences that would be attributable exclusively to having the father stay at home. The more the researcher discussed with parents, the more apparent this

became in the thoughts and comments parents made when trying to determine differences.

SAHD 2 explicitly expressed this when he claimed:

> I know they were both very good students, but I don't think I can take much of the credit
>
> for that. We, you know… [Spouse], like I said, was always big on education and reading
>
> to them and stuff like that and so that definitely helped. I was always the student that kind
>
> of struggled in school (laughs) so, but both of the kids did very well. They were at the top
>
> of their class and stuff, so I don't think that I had much to do with that (SAHD 2).

Throughout the course of interviews, parents shared similar experiences to this SAHD. When considering the effect SAHDs have had on their children's school experiences, mothers and fathers had difficulty identifying major differences. This was particularly true during our discussions on children's academic experiences.

Parents had further difficulty parsing out potential differences when specifically discussing their children's academic experiences. Several parents felt there were no differences between their children's school experiences when compared to others with differing family dynamics, and this was especially true when it came to academic experience in particular. When parents spoke specifically about how their family dynamic relates to their children's academic experiences, they repeatedly found it difficult to ascertain potential differences. Some parents mentioned differences in learning based on which parent is in the home, but more commonly parents during interviews could not come up with academic differences because of too many factors that contribute to that experience. One parent represented this notion simply by stating:

> With me being home just as much as with the older one… I don't know if there's a
>
> correlation between our children's success rate in school with me being home or, not

successful rate, but I don't know if… there's just no… yeah so, I don't know. You know?

I don't have any data (SAHD 5).

Several parents responded in congruence with SAHD 5 when he expressed this viewpoint on academic differences. Parents felt it was difficult to identify nuances in their children's success rate and academic performance in school that would be attributable to fathers staying in the home. In conversing with parents, they had the opportunity to express their observations of their own family when compared to those with differing family dynamics and parents were very insightful when pondering those differences.

Main Theme 3- Parental Personality and Personal Values Were Recurrently Brought up by Parents as a Variable Affecting Children's School Experience

As parents discussed the differences and experiences of their children in schools as compared to those with contrary parental arrangements, they frequently spoke of the influence that their individual parental personalities have on their children as opposed to the family dynamic itself. The personality and values of the parent who stays in the home are key factors in their children's experiences. One parent may value the cleanliness or responsibility in the home more than the other parent for example. The level in which those values become a priority depends on the personality in the home. SAHD 3 explained this perspective nicely when he said:

I would definitely say that I, again this goes to personality, but because I am different than [Spouse] in the sense like there are certain things that are more important to me and there are some things that are more important to her. Like a clean house is more important to me. And so, getting the kids on chores and like making sure they are accountable to those things is more important to me, whereas when she has had more time where she's at home, she does more things like… the house will kind of get messy,

but she does like, she engages with them more. She'll do like art projects with them, art,

and like take them places, um… she goes camping with them when she has time, and it's

just like me, I'm like I don't want to go camping with them. I'm already around them all

the time, like that's the last thing I want to do (laughs). So, that's kind of a factor too, I

think like there's certain things that they learn, because I'm the one at home as opposed

to her, but again that doesn't necessarily have to do with me being a guy (SAHD 3).

This quote represents a number of comments parents shared that were similar. This theme of

parental personality as a contributing factor of children's school experience came up on

numerous occasions. Parents earnestly spoke on the importance of considering personality of the

parent and not just the SAHD family dynamic or specific gender of the parent in the home when

measuring outcomes of children's school experience. Differences between mothers' and fathers'

personalities were often a contributing factor to why their children might experience differences

in school.

Main Theme 4- Parents Reported Contending with Societal Expectations and Push Back as an Influencing Variable in Their Children's School Experience

Another common theme among SAHDs and their spouses was the barriers that society

and culture places on fathers or males and how this also contributes to the experiences of their

children because of what they are able to do and have access to as fathers. Fathers frequently

mentioned these differences; however, both fathers and mothers strongly affirmed that because

of cultural and social expectations fathers often don't have access to the same network of stay-at-

home parents as their wives would if they were the stay-at-home parent, thus decreasing their

children's opportunities for interaction as well.

It's just kind of like, "Yo! Everybody! There's two parents, okay." Like why are you

always going to the mom for these things? Because that's like the default and I definitely

think that inhibited our kids when they were younger, because they weren't old enough to

kind of scoot, you know on their scooters, to their friend's house on their own and

coordinate things a little bit. For the first probably 8 years of their lives, they were

probably more isolated than other kids, purely because it was hard for us as parents to

connect with other parents and for [SAHD] to connect with other parents, because they

are just expecting me to when I wasn't doing that because I was working (Spouse 3).

The experience of children changes because of the access that SAHDs have to society.

Culturally, what is expected of fathers, and how this is frequently in opposition to fathers staying

in the home, isolates their children from others and becomes an obstacle to various school

experiences. SAHD 3 validated how other SAHDs feel about the barriers in society when he

expressed his own experience:

There is a level of stress to trying and socializing with other people, 'cause you're like

watching your kids, you can't really hold a conversation. But I never really felt like I had

the opportunity to even try, because you get together with other… if I get together with

other women like at the park or if I take my kids to the park, I'll see other people there,

there's always kind of a level of awkwardness a little. But, like I don't set out to try and

make it awkward, but with some people it's more awkward than others (SAHD 3).

The reactions from others can be such a huge part of how well SAHDs are able to integrate

themselves and their children into society. Insight from parents on their interactions with others

ranged from simple awkwardness to outright shock and disagreement.

And it's okay for the man to be home and to be raising the kids and not be the one who's

the main provider. Um… that's totally accepted there… but here I feel like it's a little

different, like completely different. I think that was a little bit of a struggle when we first

started down this path that… people were almost surprised like "Well, why isn't he

working? Is there something wrong with him? And why are you working?" (Spouse 1).

Rather than simply feeling uncomfortable, peers surrounding Spouse 1 in this experience,

questioned her family dynamic and were surprised when learning about her family's

nontraditional roles.

Additional Themes Mentioned by Parents

Subsequent to the main themes among parents, there were also a number of additional

topics both mothers and fathers discussed and shared with the interviewer. As parents reflected

on their world view and shared experiences, the following additional themes were discovered.

Minor Theme 1- Parents Felt it was Important to Have one Parent Consistently in the Home

A number of parents, both fathers and mothers, expressed their opinion of the importance

of having at least one parent in the home to support their children, no matter which parent it was.

Both SAHDs and spouses mentioned their desires and inclinations towards having at least one

parent stay at home to be available to children as needed and benefit their children's school

experiences. One father articulated this desire for stability when he indicated:

If it was a constant flip between mommy's home or daddy's home, and vice versa,

whoever has a job currently and flipping back and forth just the way she is there would

have been issues because, the… well who's home this time. But having, even though it's

reversal of what most people expect, but it being stable, is a benefit (SAHD 6).

Consistency of at least one parent at home was established as being important for both parents of households. Fathers did not feel that it mattered as much which parent was in the home as long as there was one. Commentaries from mothers were in agreement with this perception, as represented here by Spouse 6:

> Having a parent at home was really important to us. And I didn't care if it was me or him. That was something we decided… So I think, just having a parent at home is just so important to the emotional and the mental development of children, and even the social (Spouse 6).

Not only did this mother indicate her feelings on the unimportance of which parent remained in the home, but also listed various reasons why the consistency of one parent was what mattered to their family. Their children's experiences and development were influenced by the constancy of one parent. This was similar to how other parents felt as well.

Minor Theme 2- Having This Family Dynamic of Father as the Stay-at-Home Parents, Many SAHDs and Spouses Have Experienced Broader Perspectives

A good portion of participants, both SAHDs and their spouses, spoke about the increase in perspective they have developed because of the roles they have taken in their families. By taking on more nontraditional roles, they have expanded their viewpoints and their learning and are able to more fully understand the responsibilities, burdens, and benefits of each role. This has led to an increase in compassion and empathy in understanding what it feels like to "walk in each other's shoes" as one SAHD highlights:

> I guess one thing that does come to mind, is because we have this, this different lifestyle or this different way of parenting that not a lot of people do, I feel like it's given us a perspective that maybe others don't. It's been really interesting for me, like I've done a

lot of work in our neighborhood, like in my various callings in church, and I feel very

connected to a lot of the other stay-at-home people, obviously a lot of them are women,

so I feel like I can understand. I feel like I have a lot of compassion and I feel like I can

understand what their lives are like. I know how it is to be home without like… without

another parent there, it's so hard. It's hard enough even when they are there, and they

come home from work. I just feel like maybe a lot of men don't have that perspective;

they think they know but they don't… And then [Spouse] had the advantage of…you

know… she can, she's kind of had it both too. She's been a stay-at-home mom and also

working full time, so she has that perspective (SAHD 3).

By experiencing differing responsibilities and participating in more nontraditional roles in their

families, parents have increased their understanding for what each role entails. Some parents felt

that they had expanded their knowledge and perspective. These parents expressed that with an

increase in their understanding also came an increase in their appreciation:

One major thing has been the perspective that both [SAHD] and I have developed.

Because prior to that it was flip flopped, I mean I was, um… we both kind of worked part

time jobs, we both went to school, and then when he was going to school full time and I

was really full time you know taking care of, having, birthing, and nurturing and taking

care of all our babies, whatever, um… and then we flipped it and being able to have that

perspective and appreciation for each other's roles is like I mean it's incredible. I actually

don't even know how other families; how other marriages work without having to walk

in each other's shoes for some extent at this point you know (Spouse 3).

Switching stereotypical roles allowed parents to develop greater acceptance of the work both

roles require. It also magnified the connection that parents had with one another.

Minor Theme 3- Parents Felt it was Easier to Handle the Challenges in Schools When They Communicated and Problem-Solved Collaboratively

One topic parents spoke on frequently was the different challenges that came up between themselves and their children's schools and how those challenges contributed to the differences in their children's school experiences. When asked about their perspectives with these challenges, parents indicated that through the use of effective communication and collaboration, these challenges were easier to tackle. SAHD 3 gave the interviewer a glimpse of what that collaboration looks like between him and his wife:

> I feel like our lack of such divisive roles has really strengthened our ability to do everything. And I'm not trying to like… like we've had a lot of problems and stuff too, but I feel like it's been really great for us to really come together and do a lot of communication and work together and feel like we're both equally tasked in all these different areas of life. So, I guess with the schoolwork thing, we… we both think and talk and plan really hard to like how can we challenge our kids and help them progress in their mental capacities even though the school district isn't providing all those (SAHD 3).

By working together and becoming equally involved, parents were able to plan and support their children's progress in schools. As they came together, they were able to plan and provide greater opportunities for their children's advancement. According to parents, figuring out how to overcome obstacles was not the responsibility of one parent over the other. It is important for both parents to discuss problems as they come. Another mother supported these beliefs by stating:

> We would both show up as a team, it's not like oh… the person that's staying at home needs to do this. Like we're definitely not traditional in that sense of rules and what needs

to happen because I don't subscribe to that model anyways. I feel like I subscribe to well, what needs to happen and what should we do, and we just make it happen, it's not based on titles or gender or any of that, and so often like, if there is a problem, then you know, we definitely both show up. If we're concerned, we'll both show up (Spouse 4).

This mother felt that she subscribed more to a model of addressing problems together as they come up and equally rising to occasions. Rather than assigning roles and responsibilities to one particular person, parents felt that it is much more effective to collaborate and work together to face the challenges within schools, and therefore strengthen their children's school experiences.

Minor Theme 4- Parents Indicated Mothers Were Often the Primary Parent Involved in School Responsibilities

Even though most parents talked about how much easier it becomes when both parents are working together to manage the challenges in schools, some specified that their division of roles still placed a majority of that responsibility on mothers. A few parents mentioned that despite the mother working outside of the home, she was the one still contacting teachers and most involved in children's schooling. One father clarified this division of roles by stating:

She's just better, I think… better at all the connections with the teacher, with the school, you know, like text messages about soccer practice and that kind of stuff. And so, I'm not really, like same with soccer, they were texting me and I'm like, you know, "Here's my wife's number, just text her" you know? The probability that I will show up is much higher than if I do that (SAHD 5).

For some families, despite the father being the stay-at-home parent, mothers would continue to provide their children with different experiences and intervene in family-school communication. Mothers would coordinate with teachers, arrange school and social activities, address

transportation, and take on other similar responsibilities. After getting home from work Spouse 1 explained her families division of roles in helping children with schoolwork:

> It's actually me still (laughs), when I get home, then I'm the one who does their [the
>
> children's] homework with them (Spouse 1).

Most participants suggested, when splitting responsibilities in the home, they divided tasks equally and based on availability. However, for some families it was still the responsibility of mothers to complete their work outside of the home while also coordinating their children's school experiences. The work each parent contributes to the household may also influence their personal perspectives, experiences with their role in the family, and how this contributes to their children's school experiences.

In comparing parents' responses, it has provided significant insight into the lives of SAHDs and their spouses, especially those of the specific population interviewed, and has aided in addressing the inquiries set forth in this research. Parents were thoughtful in their responses. These themes contributed to answering the third research question.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

This research project has focused on the perspectives of mothers and fathers in families where fathers are the stay-at-home parent. Three specific research questions were proposed to gain a better understanding of these families and how their division of roles affects children's school experience according to (a) the mothers, (b) the fathers, and (c) comparisons of mothers' and fathers' responses. The research interviews identified both differences and similarities in the perceptions of mothers and fathers relevant to their children's school experiences. The following paragraphs include additional interpretation of the results, followed by a listing of several implications of the results, limitations of the research, and future recommendations for research.

Interpretation

In the literature review, it was noted that as roles in families shift, our understanding of those families' needs to shift as well. This finding highlighted in previous research also characterized the responses of parents interviewed in this research study.

In this study, the parents tended to speak more about their own experiences than the experiences of their children. Although parents provided some information regarding their children's school experiences, interviews gathered less information on children's school experiences than anticipated. Parents tended to contextualize their children's school experiences in terms of parent-child interactions, such that during the interviews the parents felt that they needed to clarify for the researcher their particular family dynamics. As parents spoke about their experiences, it became apparent that they do not often get to share their perspectives with other adults, such that they often used the research interview as an opportunity to share their own experiences. Following prompts to focus on their children's education, parents did expand more

on their perspectives about their children, but they apparently needed an outlet to talk about the obstacles and frustrations they were facing.

Because parents' responses emphasized their own experiences, it will be important for school psychologists and other educational professionals moving forward to dive deeper into the experiences of children for themselves rather than rely solely on the perspectives of parents. When gathering information about children's school experience from parents, it may be helpful to address and guide the conversation to allow parents to first convey the family context so they can subsequently expand on their children's school experiences. Thorough information and understanding about children's school experience may best be gathered if parents first have an opportunity to express themselves.

This study evaluated parents' perceptions, not objective facts about child experiences in schools. Often individuals tend to view their own hardships more negatively than those with an outside perspective. Listening to parents' experiences can help us empathize and better work with their children, but it is also important to recognize that several other sources of information about child experiences exist, including the children themselves. Therefore, it may take additional work from school professionals and counselors to ask children directly what their experiences are to better support and help them. Those working with families should gather information directly from multiple sources, allow each individual to thoroughly discuss their concerns and reactions so as to dive deeper and consider multiple perspective on issues.

In any qualitative research study, it is important to account for the participants' contexts. In this study, every participant identified as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The tenets of this Christian religious sect therefore were likely to have influenced the beliefs and worldviews of each participant, as well as their surrounding society in Utah. In Utah,

political beliefs tend to be more conservative, which can contribute to the specific experiences and perceptions of the sample. Many consider the area to be more patriarchal in nature, with men being the primary breadwinners in most homes. This dynamic therefore played a large role in the experiences of SAHDs and their spouses interviewed in this study. Given this very specific religious and cultural context, the parents' experiences summarized in this study are likely very different compared to other SAHDs.

One of the nuances that may surround this particular population and culture includes stereotypes concerning fathers and family dynamics. Because of their family dynamic, fathers felt that they were commonly viewed through a stereotypical sociocultural lens by school staff and adults. On a similar note, they also talked about the difficulty they had in networking with other parents because of the nontraditional division of roles and the associated consequences that their children experienced at school. For example, teachers and administrators would often assume that the fathers were the authority figures or disciplinarians in their families. Fathers were also often excluded from social activities and opportunities for parents and children to develop relationships, such as playgroups organized predominantly by mothers. Thus, the parents felt that the stereotypes placed on fathers and associated societal expectations limited their decision making and ability to work through challenges. Due to the assumptions made around SAHDs, society often limits the possibilities for families and creates distance between SAHD families and the rest of the community. Categorizing individuals and using strict scripts for what families should look like could result in parents and children feeling isolated and unaccepted in their community. Many parents interviewed, in their final comments of their interviews, took the opportunity to talk about how they wished that the community around them would be more

inclusive and accepting of nontraditional families because of the negative impact they felt it had on their children.

While families struggle with societal expectations, another concept that parents simultaneously wrestle was the idea of gender equity. Most parents in this study reported placing a strong emphasis on the equal division of roles in the home. Both mothers and fathers sought to address the respective needs of each parent and to reconcile their division of roles in a way that allowed each to participate in responsibilities equally. Some parents expressed that this was difficult and felt that responsibilities still fell mostly to one person, usually the mother. When talking about the division of roles and how challenges were faced with schools, some believed mothers maintained a lot of the responsibility in communicating with schools and coordinating their children's school experiences. Some parents also felt that mothers tended to maintain the responsibility to support their children's social interaction despite their working outside of the home. As parents continue to navigate their family dynamics, gender equity continues to be a part of negotiations. Balance within homes can be difficult to achieve, and this can be increasingly difficult for families in which circumstances have resulted in a nontraditional family dynamic.

Given these findings, it would be important to investigate in the future how theories of gender equity align with the experiences of SAHD families and their negotiated division of roles. Gender roles in society overwhelmingly place more burden on women. For example, some mothers were still expected to coordinate and be the main provider for children's social opportunities even when the father was the stay-at-home parent. Often, family friends and neighbors would reach out to mothers, automatically assuming they were the parent in charge of responsibilities in the home. The roles mothers and fathers fill in their families, staying home or

going to work, does not seem to matter as much as the context in which families reside. Often, gender expectations in the surrounding community trumped the parenting roles planned by the parents in this study. That is, what other people expected of the families with SAHDs frequently forced the family to adjust to socially normative roles rather smoothly implementing the intended parenting dynamics and division of roles.

Results of this study and responses from both parents also raise the question of whether the differences in children's school experiences are based more on gender differences than on parental personality and parent-child interactions and relationships. Among both fathers and mothers, parental personality was a factor that they mentioned frequently as influencing their children's academics, emotions, and social interactions. Parents frequently talked about the relationship that each parent has with a child as a factor that they considered when dividing roles in the household. The extent to which each parent relates to and communicates with each child can change outcomes for both parents and children, including attitudes, behaviors, social experiences, and stress levels. These interpersonal factors potentially change the dynamics in the household. Thus, parents were overall more attentive to relationship factors than they were to child or parent gender when considering parenting influences on children's school experiences.

The multiple factors that can affect children's educational experiences affect parent decisions and make it extremely difficult for parents to navigate and adjust their own family dynamics. The complexities of child education are difficult for any family to manage, but the complexities can result in emotional and exhausting work for parents who have a nontraditional family dynamic, particularly for those families who were constrained by poor health or other circumstances to have fathers remain at home while the mother works. Non-traditional families have additional obstacles to overcome because of the adverse responses that can come from their

communities. In addition, when fathers remain in the home due to medical conditions, this may increase responsibilities for mothers and can become overwhelming. Although most participants in this study consisted of parents who have attained higher levels of education and who intentionally determined to have a SAHD parenting arrangement, some families needed to take on that parenting arrangement due to financial distress or health limitations. It requires effort to compensate for all the variables that can affect children's school experience, and nontraditional parenting arrangements entail additional burdens. That is particularly the case when parents have no other option, cannot control societal reactions to their family decisions, or have limited possibilities and opportunities because of social norms and stereotypes.

In this study, the families came from differing socioeconomic circumstances, and the reasons fathers were the stay-at-home parent ranged from financial stability, personality, health purposes, or personal preference. The reason behind entering this family dynamic can influence mothers' and fathers' experiences and viewpoints on its effects. For example, fathers who chose to be in the home because of their personality may have a different perspective than a father who stays in the home due to health-related issues. In the future, researchers can best interpret the parents' contexts and motivations to better understand their perspectives.

Overall, the research findings indicated that the parenting arrangement makes some difference for children's school experience but not nearly as much of a difference as was expected. More pronounced differences were observed in the experiences of the parents themselves. The nuanced realities of the participants were somewhat different than the broad and stereotypical ways in which the research literature treats the topic of SAHDS. The professional narrative often focuses exclusively on gender differences, but the experiences of this group of parents seemed to emphasize personality differences and child-parent interactions more

than gender differences. Thus, while this research sought to learn more about how mothers and fathers perceived their children's school experiences as a function of their family dynamic, the results more often tended to focus on parent-child relationships, which varied from family to family. Parents recognized the complexities that their SAHD parenting arrangement entailed, but they repeatedly affirmed the benefits of the arrangement in their particular circumstances.

Implications

The findings of this research study have several implications for future researchers, educators, school administrators, and parents considering diverse parenting arrangements. As mentioned previously, more and more fathers are taking up the role as stay-at-home parent (Smith, 2009). With these continuing shifts in society, it is important to learn all we can about differing families and consider the viewpoints of both mothers and fathers of those families (Shidlov-Cohen, 2004). This is especially true as we have studied how these differing roles and shifts affect children. The results of this study support several aspects of the issues found in the existing literature on SAHDs as well as bring light to the nuances and considerations that should be taken into account when continuing research with SAHDs and their families.

Previous research indicated that in the school settings specifically, understanding multiple family dynamics along with the family's perspectives, experiences, and differences can promote positive change to support systems intending to benefit the parents and children (Bailey-Dick, 2002; Powell et al., 2016). The results of the current research support those claims as well. Specifically, analysis of responses found that more mothers focused on the social experiences of their children as components of overall school experience. Mothers indicated that their increased absence in the home resulted in fewer opportunities for their children to socially interact with peers during and after school. While addressing similar questions and thinking about their

children's school experience, fathers more frequently talked about the emotional and behavioral components of school experience. Fathers felt that their children's emotional experiences were dependent on the emotional intelligence and values of the stay-at-home parent. They felt that children either had greater emotional learning and experiences or fewer depending on the personality and experiences of the SAHD. Fathers also spoke consistently about child behavior, claiming that the specific behavior traits and mannerisms of children are influenced by the stay-at-home parent.

These findings are important to note in promoting positive change to systems of support for parents and children in the school setting. School staff and administrators, when discussing student issues and progress with parents, should consider the source of information. If mothers and fathers tend to address different aspects of children's school experience, then it is important to know who to talk with for specific perspectives when supporting students. As mothers and fathers can be quite different in their perspectives, the schools may gather distinct information and perspectives depending on which parent they contact.

Addressing mother and father responses separately can also inform the methods and structure of future research. As the development of research on SAHDs and their children continues, researchers should consider the perspectives of both mothers and fathers, as they offer different opinions and approaches to topics. Researchers need to consider both parents' views when conducting research on children's experiences, as a more in-depth analysis was made possible for the current project by the responses of both mothers and fathers. This supports the claim that future research should continue to account for the narratives of SAHDs' partners and children (Drake, 2015). When the spouses of SAHDs were interviewed for this project, they

offered a different perspective on their children's school experience and provided more information than the perspectives of fathers alone.

In addition to the consideration of differing parental perspectives, previous research had indicated that mothers and fathers have independent influence on their children's academic development and social well-being (Campbell & Verna, 2007; Sheridan et al., 2014). Prior literature also claimed that mothers and fathers have independent influence on behavior (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2006). The results of this thesis research suggest that the division of roles in a family can affect some areas of children's experiences, while simultaneously suggesting there are no clearly identifiable differences in other areas of children's experience. For example, when comparing mothers' and fathers' responses about their family dynamic and the differences created in their children's school experience (academic, emotional, and behavioral), parents often reported having a hard time finding specific differences. Parents especially had difficulties identifying any differences in their children's learning or school performance. However, when looking at mothers' perspectives, there were differences in their children's social interactions because there was a SAHD in the home. As previously discussed, fathers indicated differences in behaviors because they were the stay-at-home parent. These nuances are somewhat contrary to the research on parental influence that had claimed that mothers and fathers have separate and specific influence on their children. Parent responses implied there are many other factors that contribute to the parental influences on their children.

The results of this research also indicated that parents' influence on children's experiences varies between families, which supports the broader research literature that also suggests that parents have a variety of effects on childhood outcomes (Ingram et al., 2007; Myrberg & Rosén, 2009). In some instances, children are strongly affected by which parent stays

in the home, but in most families, the parents felt that the differences were relatively small. The variety of responses directly given by both mothers and fathers suggests that we must look closely at the nuances and individual characteristics of each family to understand how children's school experiences are affected.

Prior research had identified a number of parenting factors that contribute to children's school experiences (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Time spent with children, parents' abilities to communicate effectively, values and expectations in the home, and parental personality were all listed examples of ways parents can influence their children (Taylor et al., 2004; Yeung et al., 2001; Zick et al., 2001). The results of this study agree with the findings of previous research and highlights some of those factors. Parents reported thoroughly thinking through the frequency of their school involvement, the reactions and responses of society to their family dynamic, the level of child attachment with each parent, and their children's individual personalities and abilities. From the responses of parents, we learn that there are multiple interacting variables between children and parents that contribute to the differences in their children's experiences. These differences should continue to be studied and recognized by educators to help them better support the needs of students academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. Information from SAHDs and their spouses from this research can help foster the successful development and educational attainment of all children. In general, each of these findings aligns with previous research.

For all parents, the stereotypes and limitations placed on families can increase hardship and make circumstances even more difficult. In reviewing the literature, it was highlighted that common obstacles for SAHDs included gender stereotypes, societal attitudes, and social isolation (Bailey-Dick, 2002). In the current study, fathers reported being misunderstood or

stereotyped by school personnel as well. In talking about their children's school experiences, fathers reported frequent challenges because of the assumptions school personnel and adults would make regarding their roles as parents. For example, often staff expected fathers to interact with their children as disciplinarians.

Therefore, educators and administrators should foster an inclusive environment for families with SAHDs, as well as those of various backgrounds (McBride et al., 2005). Open conversation regarding parents' and children's experiences should be encouraged, and schools can provide parents space to discuss the challenges and conflicts that arise regarding their children's schooling.

The responses from parents suggest that there are not only obstacles SAHDs and their families face with schools but also with the community at large. Participating mothers and fathers expressed their hope for their surrounding society to break away from viewing parents in stereotypical roles. Results from this study suggested that children are often affected negatively when their parents are viewed through a stereotypical lens. Nontraditional families should be consulted regarding their needs and barriers, rather than questioned by others and isolated because of their family dynamic.

At the policy level, administrators and education systems should continue to consider tailored training for teachers and staff to increase cultural competence and skills to work with nontraditional families. As teachers learn more about individual families, they can gain knowledge regarding the struggles of their students and therefore address any gaps in student knowledge or experience. Social and educational policies and practices should change according to what we learn about different family dynamics (De Carvalho, 2000; Reay & Ball, 1998; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

Researchers, parents, school administrators, and educators also have to consider the implications these results have in relation to gender theory. Participants, both mothers and fathers, put thoughtful consideration into the division of roles in their homes. They typically sought gender equity. They were conscientious about highlighting multiple factors that contribute to their children's school experiences and each of the implications of parents' responses should be considered moving forward.

Limitations

Several factors that limit the scope and interpretations of this thesis research should be noted. First, any qualitative study is not intended to generalize to larger populations, so the results of this study cannot be generalized to larger populations of families with SAHDs. The objective of this thesis was to provide an in-depth exploration of the perceptions of these participants in their specific setting and demographic. Participant selection was constrained by several factors. Screening criteria were created to restrict the likelihood of secondary source bias, such as homophobia or discrimination. Therefore, participating couples were all heterosexual. Participants were all located within the state of Utah and all identified as White or Caucasian. The sample predominantly consisted of individuals who had achieved higher levels of education (bachelor's degree or higher). An additional factor unique to this group participants was their specific religious affiliation and residence in Utah. The results of this thesis are specific to this participant group, which obviously differs from other participant groups and settings.

The results of this study were also limited by the sampling method used. Participants were volunteers located using snowball sampling. When a SAHD was located, other SAHDs were found based on the original SAHD's network. Participants were also located using the researcher's network of individuals. Both of these methods limited the sample in many ways.

Nevertheless, even within this small sample of SAHDs, differences were apparent between families. Across participants there were a variety of reasons why fathers were the primary parent in the home. Families came from differing circumstances, and the reasons fathers served as the stay-at-home parent ranged from financial stability, personality, health purposes, or simple desire. Future research considering the reasons families have for having the father remain in the home as the primary caregiver may likely improve the interpretation of parents' experiences and perceptions.

Further limitations are associated with the timeframe in which this thesis was completed. Interviews and analysis took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversations with participants were originally intended to be in person; however, they were ultimately conducted using other means of virtual communication, such as Google Hangouts and Zoom. Several measures were put in place to maintain the quality of interviews and interpretations. Nevertheless, this lack of in-person interviewing may have prevented or changed the participants' interactions with the interviewer.

Finally, despite the steps taken to ensure quality data collection and analyses in this thesis, there is still the potential for the existing biases of the researcher to have affected analyses and interpretation. These limitations are meant to be a starting point for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the limitations constraining this thesis, additional studies should continue to investigate mothers' and fathers' perspectives of their children's school experience. Further research should be conducted using larger sample sizes and more diverse populations. Conducting additional research using various populations would be a good first step to better understanding the perspectives of SAHDs and their spouses across different contexts. Parents

reported a number of contributing factors to their children's school experience not limited to the family dynamic within the home. Therefore, results may vary according to location, culture, race, SES, level of educational attainment, etc.

An additional step for future research would be to include children in the interview process to more fully represent family perspectives and experiences. This research focused on mothers' and fathers' perspectives of their children's school experience. Future research can examine children in SAHD families about their own experiences in public schools. Including children's perspectives will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the SAHD family dynamic and correlated experiences.

Furthermore, it may be valuable for researchers to extend the interview process to include school stakeholders, such as teachers, administrators, and school psychologists to gain their perspectives of interactions with SAHDs and their children. These individuals would have additional insight into children's school experiences within the school setting. Comparing their responses to that of mothers and fathers would seem to be a particularly worthwhile area of future inquiry.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The goal of this research was to describe both fathers' and mothers' perspectives about their children's school experiences when the father provides childcare in the home and the mother works full time outside the home. Although previous research has examined several aspects of SAHDs, very limited research has been conducted on how their family dynamic affects children's school experiences. Research available on SAHDs also does not frequently consider both the perspectives of mothers and fathers simultaneously.

By interviewing both mothers and fathers regarding their children's school experiences, this thesis identified several themes prevalent among parents. The experiences of SAHDs and their spouses impact their children's school experience through managing different expectations in the home, adapting to the child's personality and ability, responding to societal expectations and pushback, and addressing relationships between each parent and child. Children's school experience can differ in the areas of social interaction, emotional experiences, and behaviors depending on the stay-at-home parent, but parents in general reported having difficulty identifying differences in their children's school experiences attributable to their family dynamic. Mothers tended to emphasize their children's social experiences and felt that they had fewer opportunities to interact with peers because they had a SAHD. Fathers tended to emphasize their own emotional experiences relevant to breaking social norms and also relevant behavioral issues experienced by their children. Overall, parents put effort into how to best support their children based on their individual circumstances.

The aim of this research was to understand more fully the stories of mothers and fathers in SAHD families and their influences on their children's school experience. The research found

a need for additional support for children of families with SAHDs through stereotype reduction and a willingness to understand the circumstances and needs of each family. In the future, researchers can continue to examine the perspectives of SAHDs and their families with an aim to improve parent-school interactions.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Letter of Approval to Conduct Research

Memorandum

To: Timothy Smith
Department: BYU - EDUC - Counseling, Psychology, & Special Education
From: Sandee Aina, MPA, HRPP Manager
        Wayne Larsen, MAcc, IRB Administrator
        Bob Ridge, PhD, IRB Chair
Date: March 17, 2020
IRB#: IRB2020-073
Title: Fathers as Stay-at-Home Dads: Fathers' and Mothers' Perspectives on Children's School Experiences

Brigham Young University's IRB has approved the research study referenced in the subject heading as expedited level, categories 6 and 7.

This category does not require an annual continuing review. Each year near the anniversary of the approval date, you will receive an email reminding you of your obligations as a researcher. The email will also request the status of the study. You will receive this email each year until you close the study.

The IRB may re-evaluate its continuing review decision for this decision depending on the type of change(s) proposed in an amendment (e.g., protocol change the increases subject risk), or as an outcome of the IRB's review of adverse events or problems.
The study is approved as of 03/17/2020. Please reference your assigned IRB identification number in any correspondence with the IRB.

Continued approval is conditional upon your compliance with the following requirements:

1. A copy of the approved informed consent statement and associated recruiting documents (if applicable) can be accessed in iRIS. No other consent statement should be used. Each research subject must be provided with a copy or a way to access the consent statement.
2. Any modifications to the approved protocol must be submitted, reviewed, and approved by the IRB before modifications are incorporated in the study.
3. All recruiting tools must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to use.
4. In addition, serious adverse events must be reported to the IRB immediately, with a written report by the PI within 24 hours of the PI's becoming aware of the event. Serious adverse events are (1) death of a research participant; or (2) serious injury to a research participant.
5. All other non-serious unanticipated problems should be reported to the IRB within 2 weeks of the first awareness of the problem by the PI. Prompt reporting is important, as unanticipated problems often require some modification of study procedures, protocols, and/or informed consent processes. Such modifications require the review and approval of the IRB.

Instructions to access approved documents, submit modifications, report complaints and adverse events can be found on the IRB website under iRIS guidance: http://orca.byu.edu/irb/iRIS/story_html5.html.

APPENDIX B

Parent Recruitment Questionnaire

Recruitment Questionnaire

Introduction:
This research study is being conducted by Dr. Timothy Smith, PhD and Taylor Michelsen, Ed.S. graduate student at Brigham Young University to learn about children's school experiences when the father is home with the child before/after school and the mother works outside the home. You were invited to participate because of your personal experience with this family arrangement. We value your experiences very much.

This Recruitment Form is to determine whether or not individuals and couples meet the specific criteria required for participation in this study.

Follow-up:
If you and your spouse meet criteria and agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:
- You will be interviewed for up to fifty (50) minutes about your perspective of your children's school experiences because of your family arrangement.
 - The interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements.
- The interview will take place at a time and location convenient for you.
 - The researcher may contact you later to clarify your interview answers for up to twelve (12) minutes.
 - Total time commitment will be approximately 60 minutes.

Risks/Discomforts:
Discussions of family dynamics may have the potential to cause some discomfort for you. Risk to privacy is expected to be minimal, as identifying information should not be disclosed during the interview. Contact information is the only information collected by the researcher. Contact information will not be connected or included in the recording data in anyway.

If at any time you feel uncomfortable with a question on this recruitment questionnaire you are allowed to skip and leave questions unanswered if you wish. All responses will be confidential in that no names or identifying information will be linked to the data collected in any way.

Everything you say today will be kept confidential, except if you disclose child abuse. The researcher will report evidence of child abuse to authorities (DCFS).

Confidentiality:
This recruitment data only contains demographic information and information about time spent at home. When the recruitment survey is completed, the data will be exported to an Excel file without names.

If you meet the specific criteria for this study, the questionnaire will ask you for your contact information if you would like to continue participating. This contact information will not be used in any way in the research and is merely used to contact you. All Qualtrics and questionnaire information will be deleted upon the completion of the data analysis and approval of the research.

If you do not meet the specific criteria for this study, the questionnaire will end before you would be asked to provide your contact information.

Participation
Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely.

Questions about the Research
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Timothy Smith at (801) 422-1311 or email tbs@byu.edu for further information.

If you are willing to continue to the form, please indicated below.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q1 Are you currently married?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q2 Are you a stay-at-home dad or the spouse of a stay-at-home dad (even if not all the time)?

○ Stay-at-Home Dad (1)

○ Spouse of Stay-at-Home Dad (2)

○ None of the above (3)

Q3 Do you and your spouse live in the same household?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q4 Do you have at least one child in the home that attended grades 1 to 12 in a school during the 2018-19 year?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q5 What is your age range?

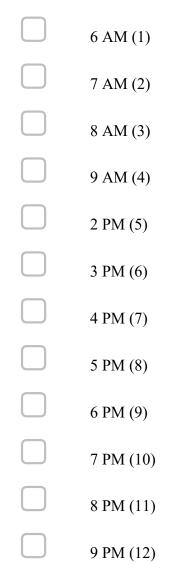○ 18-21 years (1)

○ 22-25 years (2)

○ 26-29 years (3)

○ 30-33 years (4)

○ 34-37 years (5)

○ 38-41 years (6)

○ 42-45 years (7)

○ 46-49 years (8)

○ 50 and older (9)

Q6 How many <u>hours per week</u> do you currently work *outside* the home during *weekday* hours (7AM to 6PM)?

_____

Q7 How many <u>hours weekly</u> do you currently work *outside* of the home on weekends <u>and</u> evenings 6-11PM?

_____

Q8 How many hours are you usually in the home Monday through Friday?

Q9 Indicate which hours you are usually in the home (Monday through Friday) from the list below. (Mark all that apply)

- [ ] 6 AM (1)

- [ ] 7 AM (2)

- [ ] 8 AM (3)

- [ ] 9 AM (4)

- [ ] 2 PM (5)

- [ ] 3 PM (6)

- [ ] 4 PM (7)

- [ ] 5 PM (8)

- [ ] 6 PM (9)

- [ ] 7 PM (10)

- [ ] 8 PM (11)

- [ ] 9 PM (12)

Q10 Would you say that you are the parent who is *primarily* responsible for the child's schooling (i.e., communicating with teachers, helping with homework, taking kids to school, etc.)?

_____

Q11 What do you think are some of the advantages of having this family dynamic in the home?

_____

Q12 What do you think some disadvantages have been?

_____

Q13 How (if any) would you say family relationships have changed because of this arrangement?

_____

Q14 What is your role in your child's schooling (i.e. who communicates with teachers, helps with homework, takes kids to school, etc.)?

_____

Q15 What would you say are your responsibilities concerning your children outside of school (i.e. bedtimes, routine, extracurricular activities, organizations, etc.)?

_____

Thank you so much for your participation thus far. You have met requirements for this study. **If you would like to participate further please leave your name and contact information below, and the researcher will reach out to you to set up a time and location for an interview.**

If you have any further questions, please contact Timothy Smith at (801) 422-1311 or email at tbs@byu.edu.

Name & Contact Information Here:

_____

APPENDIX C

Interview Guiding Questions

Both Fathers and Mothers

(1) What were some of the main reasons you chose the stay-at-home dad family dynamic?

(2) What do you think are some of the advantages of having this family dynamic in the home?

(3) What do you think some disadvantages have been?

(4) How (if any) would you say family relationships have changed because of this arrangement?

(5) What is your role in your child's schooling (i.e. who communicates with the teachers, helps with homework, takes kids to school, etc.)?

(6) What would you say are your responsibilities concerning your children outside of school (i.e. bedtimes, routine, extra-curricular activities, organizations, etc.)?

Specific to Fathers

(7) How do you feel your parental arrangement as the primary caregiver in the home has affected your child's/children's school experience?

(8) How do you think your child's academics, grades, or school performance have been affected?

(9) In thinking about your child's/children's interactions with friends from school, in what ways have those interactions changed since the time you first started being a stay-at-home dad?

OR (Always been the primary caregiver) How do you feel your child's/children's social interactions are different from their peers because of your role as a stay-at-home dad?

(10) All children express emotions. Think of times when your child/children expressed emotions this month. In what ways were their emotions relevant to your role as a stay-at-home father? In what ways did your parenting arrangement allow you to address your child's/children's emotions?

(11) What changes, if any, have you seen in your child's/children's behaviors at school? How might those possibly have been influenced by the parenting arrangement?

(12) What challenges in the school, if any, have you and your spouse discussed together? How does your parenting arrangement allow you to handle those challenges?

Specific to Mothers

(7) How do you feel your parental arrangement, with your spouse as primary caregiver in the home, has affected your child's/children's school experience?

(8) How do you think your child's academics, grades, or school performance have been affected?

(9) In thinking about your child's/children's interactions with friends from school, in what ways have those interactions changed since you and your spouse first started the family dynamic of having your spouse be a stay-at-home dad?

OR (Always been the primary caregiver) How do you feel your child's/children's social interactions are different from their peers because of your family dynamic with your spouse as a stay-at-home dad?

(10) All children express emotions. Think of times when your child/children expressed emotions this month. In what ways were their emotions relevant to your family dynamic with your spouse as a stay-at-home father? In what ways did your parenting arrangement allow you to address your child's/children's emotions?

(11) What changes, if any, have you seen in your child's/children's behaviors at school? How might those possibly have been influenced by the parenting arrangement?

(12) What challenges in the school, if any, have you and your spouse discussed together? How does your parenting arrangement allow you to handle those challenges?

Consent Form

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction

This research study is being conducted by Timothy Smith, PhD and Taylor Michelsen, graduate student at Brigham Young University, to better understand the schooling experiences of children (grades 1-12) who have father caregivers. You are invited to participate because of your home arrangement in which the father is at home at the same time the child is at home during day hours before/after school. We very much value your perspectives and experiences.

Procedures

- If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:
- You will be interviewed for up to fifty (50) minutes about your role in a family with a father home before/after school. We will ask open-ended questions about your perspective of your child(ren)'s school experiences relevant to your family arrangement.
- The interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements
- The interview will take place at a time and location convenient for you
- The researcher may contact you later to clarify your responses for no longer than twelve (12) minutes.
- Total time commitment will be approximately 60 minutes

Risks/Discomforts

Risks should be very minimal. Discussions of family dynamics may have the potential to cause some discomfort for you. Risk to privacy is expected to be minimal, as any identifying information will not be disclosed during the interview. Contact information is the only information collected by the researcher. Contact information will not be connected or included in the recording data in anyway.

You may choose to not answer questions at any time if you wish. All responses will be confidential in that no names or identifying information will be linked to the data collected in any way. Audio recordings will not include any identifying information, and the research team will be limited to just two individuals and the thesis committee, who will be auditing the results, but they will not have access to any identifying information.

Everything you say today will be kept confidential; however, the researcher is a mandated reporter and is required to report any child abuse disclosed during the interview or data collection to the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS). Any disclosure of child abuse will not be protected by confidentiality.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you, however refreshments will be offered during the interview. It is also hoped that through your participation educators may learn about stay at home dads and their children's experiences. This information may also benefit other families considering adopting different parenting roles.

Confidentiality

The recruitment data that was collected via Qualtrics only contained contact information and information about time spent at home. With recruitment completed, that data will be exported to and Excel file without names or any identifying information. All Qualtrics data will be deleted upon the completion of data analysis and research approval.

Audio recordings will be used to collect data during the interview. The research assistant's phone (which is password protected) will be used to record the interview with your permission. This is necessary to analyze the interview responses adequately. Recordings will be uploaded to Box, a secure cloud storage provided at BYU. Recordings will not be shared with anyone other than the research assistant who conducted the interview and a transcriptionist in the same office. Recordings will then be deleted from the research assistant's phone immediately following transcription. Any identifying information mentioned during the interview (e.g., names) will not be included in the transcripts. All analysis will be completed from the transcripts, not the audio recordings. Recordings will be deleted from Box following completion and approval of the thesis by the thesis committee. Dr. Timothy Smith will complete an audit of the analysis based on the transcripts to ensure that the analysis is both rational and logical, however he will not have access to the recordings.

Once again, everything you say during the interview will be kept confidential, **except child abuse. The interviewer is mandated to** report child abuse to authorities (DCFS).

Compensation
You will not be receiving any compensation for participating in the study.

Participation
Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely.

Questions about the Research
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Timothy Smith at (801) 422-1311 or email tbs@byu.edu for further information.

Questions about Your Rights as Research Participants
If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant contact IRB Administrator at (801) 422-1461; A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; irb@byu.edu.

Statement of Consent

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Name (Printed):_____ ____Signature:_____ _____Date:_____