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Options and Limits in a Woman's World

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OPTIONS AND LIMITS IN A WOMAN'S WORLD

Teresa A. Davis, B.S.

**An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Lindenwood College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science**

1991

Abstract

This is a study of women who are ascribed the role of mother, but who would also like to pursue a satisfying career. These women experience multiple demands when trying to fulfill these multiple roles. The study focused on how women integrate motherhood and employment. The methodology employed in this study was qualitative. Information was solicited through the use of informal personal interviews conducted by the researcher. A single hour interview was conducted with each participant in the research project. The sample consisted of 10 full-time working mothers who volunteered to participate in the project.

The purpose of this study was of a practical nature. It is hoped that the analysis of the information may be helpful to women experiencing the dilemma of multiple roles, as well as educators, physicians, and counselors who will increasingly face these issues in the 1990s.

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Teresa A. Davis, B.S.

**A Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Lindenwood College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science**

1991

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Chapter I

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Dual career families have become a societal structure in 52% of American homes (Berg, 1986). Social and economic conditions have led women to the working world accompanied by significant personal and social stressors. Although women have been ascribed the role of mother, they also want self-fulfillment from a career. American women experience many pressures when fulfilling demands of working full time while mothering. Because of these two equally important roles, women find themselves experiencing conflict in integrating employment with motherhood.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of a woman's world of work and motherhood and how women maintain a balance between the two powerful roles.

The hypothesis of this study is that women continue to maintain managerial authority of the family while working full time, and because of this familial demand, women experience symptoms of high stress that include decreased self-esteem, inflexibility in problem solving, a sense of incompetence, and an inability to define one's own needs.

This exploratory study will add to our understanding of the 90s woman based on the quality of life of the women involved in the research. The intent of the study is to explore a woman's world of dual roles and how she makes this duality work.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Women in our society are faced with two powerful and polarized traditions. The first is the ultra-domestic motherhood of the fifties; the other is the attempt to replicate the male competitive world of the feminist seventies. An American woman is pushed to the extremes if she attempts to fulfill the demands of both of these roles. Her success is further undermined by societal inflexibilities. Lack of help from outside sources do not help women mediate their two jobs. In order to cope with this dilemma of motherhood, we must understand this institution in our society and how it came to be that way.

Why Women Mother

Women's maternal role is central to the sexual division of labor. This has profound effects on women's ambiguous social needs and aspirations (Chodorow, 1978). But because mothers are women, why does the nurturing parent have to be a female?

The Argument from Nature

Nonfeminist theorists assume the structure of parenting is biologically and naturally explained. The following assumptions contribute to the biological bases of mothering.

One explanation holds that women are mothers because they always have been. This implies that

mothering retains the form of its earliest origins (Chodorow, 1978).

This natural fact is theoretically uninteresting and does not explain genetic, morphological, and hormonal sex differences which affect our social experiences. So, is there a biological basis in women that explains caretaking capacities?

One explanation put forth mainly by anthropologists combines a functionalist account and an evolutionary explanation of the "origins of man." Since the human species is dependent on adult care longer than any other animal species, a situation to rear infants safely and effectively was created. Men's biological aggressiveness, strength, and speed made it natural for them to hunt, and therefore women were bound to the care of the off-spring which prevented absence from the community (Rich, 1976). Alice Rossi extends this view by stating that this sexual division of labor was not only essential to hunter-gatherer societies but soon became built into human physiology (Chodorow, 1978).

The fact that women bear children and lactate provides another possible biological component to mothering. The act of birth was, and continues to be, perceived as profoundly awesome. Out of her body the woman creates man, woman, and perpetual existence. In biological motherhood, woman is a producer and

stabilizer of life, and therefore "knows" the art of healing and that of nurturing the young (Rich, 1976). Winnicott suggests this knowledge is acquired throughout the mother's pregnancy. The pregnancy results in a mother's identification with the infant after birth and also provides a powerful sense of the baby's needs (Chodorow, 1978). A third biological basis to mothering was put forth by Psychoanalyst Judith Kestenberg in 1978. She argues that maternal feelings develop from a childhood wish to consecrate early vaginal sensations (Chodorow, 1978).

Biologist Niles Newton suggests coitus, parturition, and lactation cannot guarantee successful reproduction without caretaking behavior, so they must therefore biologically cause it. According to Chodorow (1978), this belief is not substantiated by Newton's evidence.

Lastly, many biological theorists believe that women's mothering exists due to hormones. It has been found that a mother's oxytocin is secreted in response to a baby's crying. This leads to nipple erection prior to nursing. Oxytocin stimulation may lead to other features that contribute to mother-infant bonding, although no evidence has been provided (Chodorow, 1978).

Hormonal determinism for mothering has been minimally supported by researching hormone

abnormalities. Androgen-insensitive chromosomal males (xy males born with female-looking genitalia and reared unambiguously as girls) are preoccupied with having children and are as equally nurturant toward infants as females. Conversely, people with Turner's Syndrome have a single x chromosome. This is sufficient to allow the embryo to develop into a female, but no androgen is developed. Evidence exists that girls with Turner's Syndrome have a stronger desire for heterosexual romance, marriage, and babies than do most women. This could be due to their total lack of androgen, something which we know normal girls produce in small amounts. Finally, chromosomal female in utero who received larger quantities of androgens tend to be less interested in motherhood. This data suggests that male hormones may suppress maternalism (Ruse, 1988). Conclusions about the biological basis of human parenting are numerous but are only speculative. Parenting can also be analyzed in contextual terms depending on certain social situations.

The Social Context Theory

Feminists argue an alternative explanation for the woman's maternal role. The process by which women come to mother can be termed in feminist literature books as role training or cognitive role learning. Basically, girls choose to do "girl-things" because they identify

with their mother and learn to be girl-like (Chodorow, 1978). The acquisition of a gender role results from interpersonal and affective relationships with parents, school personnel, and other families. The media also perpetuates stereotypic roles associated with gender.

This role-training argument originated within an economic context which depended on the woman's mothering role (Chodorow, 1978). This is similar to the functionalist-bioevolutionary perspective as discussed on page 4. Currently, income inequality perpetuates this ideology.

Gornick (1971) supports the social learning theory by stating that psychology has tried to define motherhood in terms of inner traits without noting the social context:

What a person does and who he believes himself to be will in general be a function of what people around him expect him to be, and what the overall situation in which he is acting implies he is (Gornick, 1978, p. 210).

They base this conclusion on the Rosenthal experiments which tested teachers' perceptions of students who they thought had high I.Q.'s. The teachers' conduct toward those "perceived" high achievers caused those target students to perform at a higher level (Gornick, 1971). This points quite clearly to the influence of social expectation. "People are what you expect them to be" (Gornick, 1971, p. 215).

Another series of experiments by Stanley Milgram in which subjects obeyed orders to administer a lethal shock to another subject also supports the strong effect of social context and influence (Gornick, 1971).

To summarize, people seem to conform to direct and indirect messages from society. According to the social learning theory, gender roles will continue to be assigned to girls and boys because they are basically told to be a certain way. As the subjects in Stanley Migram's experiment conformed to his instructions, girls will grow to be mothers because females and males conform to society's instructions. Currently, a large part of being female is becoming a mother. Future generations have the responsibility to allow every individual to fulfill her own intrinsic nature.

Has Mother Love Changed?

The History of Women and Mothering

The term "mother" is one of the oldest in the English language (Dally, 1982). But the word "motherhood" is not found prior to 1597 (Dally, 1982). There have always been mothers, but motherhood was an invented role. Each society has defined it in its own terms and imposed its own expectations on mothers.

In the Victorian era, being a mother strengthened the perfectionism (utopianism?) of women. In our society, less idealizing of women has occurred while

motherhood continues to be held in high esteem. To cope with this crisis, we must examine the history of motherhood.

Most of us assume our children will survive. Only in recent years have medical advances instilled that confidence. Even our ancestors in the last century were accustomed to high mortality of their children. In 1872, one figure quoted is that 69% of children died under age five (Dally, 1982).

In the days of high infant mortality, Aries (in Dally, 1982), writes of parents' indifference to their children. Direct and indirect warnings against emotional bonding with the child existed. Parents actually prepared for their infant's death at the prenatal stage. For example, Queen Anne of England lost 14 of her 15 babies before delivery (Dally, 1982).

As history continued, surviving children did not stay with their parents long. Their ties were to the wider group, village, or community (Dally, 1982). Being together at the dinner table was not as important as contributing economically to future generations.

It is evident that emotional bonding between child and parent was minimal. One historian actually hypothesized that infant mortality could be explained by the lack of maternal love (Dally, 1982).

In the 1700s, loyalties declined towards the community and increased towards the Church. Puritanism

rose and encouraged the family unit. Each family member became important in his own right, rather than just a member of the kinship. The Declaration of Independence fostered and preserved the three rights of humans (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness). Much greater attention was paid to children in this atmosphere. Quaker William Penn advised parents to "love them with wisdom, correct them with affection, never strike in passion, and suit the correction to their ages as well as their fault" (Dally, 1982, p. 54).

During the next period in the evolution of the family, moral reform, paternal authority, and sexual repression revived. The status of women declined and became one of passivity and submission to husbands. Prudery became an obsession in the 1800s, and girls were taught to assume they were frail and sickly (Dally, 1982). Was this the progenitor of gender roles today? The history of women and motherhood paved the way for today's maternal role. Indeed, the 20th century has brought more of a balance between submission and detachment in regard to parenthood, although the current changing times have made it difficult for women to achieve life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. With a woman's newly acquired freedom, she still seems to maintain chief executive power of the family which may interfere with the development of her personal goals (Evans, 1989). In

choosing to take advantage of her opportunities, economic disadvantages, gender role expectations, and time management difficulties may continue to be obstacles to a woman's basic rights (Evans, 1989).

Maternal Employment

Pre-War and Wartime History

Throughout the nineteenth century, American women achieved more freedoms than their European counterparts. Frontier expansion explains this development. Women had an economic role in frontier settings (Hewlett, 1986). Women and men worked as partners to provide food and clothing for their children. Wilderness life forced men and women to be on equal footing.

During the first third of the century, woman's position improved rapidly. They obtained the right to vote in 1920; rapid industrialization of appliances promised to reduce domestic chores to a minimum; educational opportunities for women increased rapidly; and divorce and contraception became more readily practiced (Dally, 1982).

This importance of the pioneer women was enhanced by the fact that she was in short supply. While outnumbered by men, her economic importance led to early emancipation in the West. For example, Kansas City had 16 woman mayors by 1900 (Hewlett, 1986). The doors of higher education opened in the 1860s when

women's colleges like Vassar and Smith were founded and others became coeducational. By the mid-1930s, women composed 40% of students in higher learning institutions (Hewlett, 1986).

These acquired freedoms and the drive toward a higher level of happiness were to be pushed during the Second World War. At the peak of the war, 14 million men served the armed forces (Hewlett, 1986). There was a desperate need for women to replace men in the work force. These pressures forced 5 million women into employment. These women took up traditional female employment as well as vacant male jobs in chemicals, petroleum, steel, and aircraft (Hewlett, 1986). Posters promised "man-sized" jobs with "man-sized" wages. In 1942, the federal government allocated \$4,000,000 to fund child-care centers, and by 1945, 100,000 children were enrolled in these facilities (Hewlett, 1986).

In 1945, when women were more powerful than ever, men came home from the war. The men guiding U. S. policy feared that the return of peace would bring massive unemployment and deep depression. They were unsure if enough jobs would be available to meet expectations of the returning soldiers. Policy action was based on this gloomy view of the postwar period, so women workers were being sent home. A 1946 New York Times article declared that "the courtship of

women workers has ended" (Hewlett, 1986, p. 241).

Reversion to prewar patterns seemed to be the only possibility, and as several historians have clearly shown, women did not keep the range of jobs they acquired during World War II. How did the demobilization of women occur?

One could theorize that women were persuaded and coerced back to hearth and home. Idealization of the homemaker role placed an almost mystical importance on the mother: "Mother-love in infancy and childhood is as important for mental health as are vitamins and proteins for physical health" (Dally, 1982, p. 98).

Because Bowlby wrote so convincingly, mother love was assumed to be as Bowlby said it should be. To make a woman completely content as a 1962 Saturday Evening Post put it, "it takes a man, but the chief purpose of her life is motherhood" (Hewlett, 1986, p. 252).

This externally imposed ideological emphasis on domesticity is probably the most widespread interpretation of the postwar transformation (Milkman, 1987). Freudian theorists defined this retreat to the home in terms of sexuality. During intercourse woman's role was passive and accepting, and the final goal was impregnation. The climax of the sex act was nursing the newborn who had been conceived. Therefore, passivity, dependence, and the desire to raise children was the formula for female contentment. Females who

fought against this view were thought to be suffering from penis envy (Hewlett, 1986).

A second major explanation for women's postwar exclusion from "men's jobs" was the operation of the "last hired, first fired" seniority principle. Seniority was ultimately of limited importance for employment rapidly expanded after the war, and turnover rates were extremely high. Actually, only about 20 percent of the nation's returning World War II veterans were entitled to reemployment rights (Milkman, 1987).

Those women war workers who did remain in the labor force had frequent complaints of sex discrimination (Milkman, 1987). Management was accused of deliberately making work difficult for the women in hopes of inducing them to quit. They were given very hard jobs, shifts, and very particular directions to follow (Milkman, 1987).

Despite these important limits, war employment of women did contribute to the further development of their work role. War mobilization gave many women the opportunity to work for pay, and the effect of work experience on future choices of work is strongly correlated (Van Horn, 1988).

The Feminist Movement

Women seemed to be forced into this "ideal" role, and soon they rebelled against this ultradomesticity and the male-centered counterculture. Housewives had

the responsibility of the emotional and cognitive development of their children as well as the maintenance of their home as an island of tranquility, and act as a "sounding board" or "refueling station" (Hewlett, 1986, p. 326).

Disillusioned mothers realized they had been seduced into a socially devalued role (Hewlett, 1986). Thus the 1960s saw the emergence of two types of bitter women: radical feminists pursuing self-sufficiency completely without men, while mainstream feminists trying to be clones of the male in the working world (Hewlett, 1986). But a large group of women still clung to the American Dream. Feminism forgot the women who wanted and needed to be homemakers (Hewlett, 1986).

Both women's liberation factions fought for six demands (Dally, 1982):

1. Free 24-hour nurseries
2. Equal pay
3. Equal education and job opportunity
4. Free contraception and abortion
5. Financial and legal independence
6. An end to lesbian discrimination

So Long, Superwoman

Thus in the 1970s and 1980s, the feminist movement produced many highly ambitious women. Although women were ascribed the role of mother, they also wanted self-fulfillment from a career. These two equally

important drives manufactured "superwomen." Women wanted easy integration of motherhood and employment (Berg, 1986).

During the seventies, advertisements were directed toward this lifestyle. One popular advertisement showed a glamorous woman coming home, swapping her briefcase for an apron, then a cocktail dress while singing:

I can bring home the bacon and fry it up in
a pan . . . and never, never let you forget
you're a man . . . cuz I'm a woman,
W - O - M - A - N . . . (Berg, 1986, p. 49).

Yet, in another commercial, a day in the life of a seventies' woman was depicted as a hurricane (Berg, 1986).

The juggling of two equally important priorities fostered the loss of a center of existence for many women. Without this center life became a chaotic mess of events (Berg, 1986). Many superwomen underestimated the real difficulties of these two simultaneous priorities, although, this stage was perhaps necessary to provide women self-confidence after the post-war emotional battering (Berg, 1986).

In analyzing the past 50 years, one thing seems sure: neither the feminist's movement nor the ultradomestic role of the 50s provided economic security for women. They are now faced with finding a balance by making decisions. With every decision comes

a choice.

The war years and the superwoman phenomenon did serve some purpose. As previously mentioned, it gave women confidence and carefully analyzed the differences between women and men in terms of roles. Because of this analysis, women's roles seem to be more realistic and still continue to contribute to America's economy.

For example, female personality characteristics have become more complementary to male characteristics. Females tend to give more solutions to problems, prefer sustained activity without deep drops of energy output, perceive the world more realistically, and are more sensitive to needs (Gornick & Moran, 1971). Gornick and Moran (1971) further explain women's well-known "emotional" nature to be frustration after having their intelligence and capabilities often put in second place. These authors also explain men's aggressiveness as repression of feelings.

This analysis of strengths and weaknesses between the sexes has helped put the dual roles of women in perspective. Some progress has been made although many conflicts still exist today. The remainder of the literature review will examine the dilemmas of working women of the 80s and 90s.

Modern Dilemmas of Working Women

In today's society women find it necessary to explore their conscious and unconscious attitudes about

parenting. An important issue for most marriages is when to decide to become parents. This timing consideration is grounded in their inner stance toward parenting (Daniels & Weirgarten, 1982).

Five family-timing scenarios have emerged with today's couples. Four of the five patterns have been called the natural ideal, the brief wait, programmatic postponement, and the mixed script (Daniels & Weingarten, 1982). Couples who hold the natural ideal believe parenthood is not for deliberation and children come when they are conceived. The brief wait entails a two or three year deferment of parenthood after marriage to enjoy each other. Programmatic postponement puts off parenthood until career goals have been attained. A mixed script results when partners disagree about family timing. And finally, some couples opt for no children (Daniels & Weingarten, 1982).

College educated women are evenly divided between the brief wait and programmatic postponement. The natural ideal is the most common scenario of women who did not attend college (Baber & Monaghan, 1988). Forty percent of middle-aged women today, if given the opportunity, would have chosen different family-timing outcomes (Daniels & Weingarten, 1982).

Whatever the timing of parenthood, it makes a difference whether women follow a sequential or

simultaneous pattern of accommodating work and family (Daniels & Weingarten, 1982). A sequential pattern allows women to stagger or alternate between work and parenting. In the simultaneous pattern, employment and mothering overlap (Daniels & Weingarten, 1982). A women's parenting ideology as well as economic realities affect the ways in which she integrates mothering into her life. Unfortunately, economic realities force many women who have chosen motherhood to follow the simultaneous pattern (Daniels & Weingarten, 1982).

Employed mothers of infants are a fast growing subgroup of our population. In 1976, 31% of all mothers were employed. In 1985, that percentage increased to 48% (Chase-Lansdale & Owen, 1987). Berg (1986) reported 52% of all women married or unmarried with preschool children are employed.

A clear definition of employment is necessary. Work is doing. It may entail involvement in politics, community effort, and volunteer activity. But approximately 50% of women are in the paid work force part-time or full-time (Daniels & Weingarten, 1982).

A dual-career family is one in which the husband and wife are pursuing careers. "Career" implies more than just a job. It requires a high degree of commitment and a fairly continuous developmental schedule. Thus, while many women have jobs, only a few

pursue careers. In fact, many women take jobs beneath their capabilities to devote more time to their families (Rice, 1979).

Whether a woman composes half of a dual-worker family or half of a dual-career family, difficulties arise in the integration of motherhood and employment. By and large, caring for children is primarily the mother's responsibility (Daniels & Weingarten, 1982). It is the woman who sees to the daily tasks of family life. Buying clothes, attending to needs, getting toys, and thinking ahead are requirements that children need met. Throughout readings, the general consensus is that women attend to these "little things" (Daniels & Weingarten, 1982). A working mother seems to be wrought with responsibilities that produce difficulties as well as rewards.

Benefits Experienced by Working Mothers

What is the relationship between having multiple social roles and psychological well-being? Krause (1984) argues that outside employment may actually buffer the effects of role overload. Proponents of this position are becoming more numerous.

One must begin by examining the five functions of employment for both men and women. Occupation provides income, regulates activities, gives self-identity, decreases isolation, and provides life experiences (Alston, 1986). After assuming that these five

functions have been met for women, it is self-explanatory that work for mothers and nonmothers increases self-esteem and confidence. Recent studies have indicated that the more social roles a woman has, the higher self-esteem she attains (Hoover & Dunlop, 1981).

There is also evidence that employed women have few symptoms of psychosomatic illness and mental distress (Pietromonaco, Manis, & Frohardt-Lane, 1986). Working women also tend to spend more quality time with their children (Hoover & Dunlop, 1981). And, if one has an "ideal husband," then equitable roles in marriages become a benefit (Krause, 1984). Mary Kenny as taken from Dally (1982) concludes the ideal husband to be:

. . . not just someone who is helpful, supportive, and mature; not just someone who is not competing for the same things and at the same time as his wife; not just who is flexible, uses his initiative, and is ready to turn his hand to anything; not just someone who gets on with his mother and encourages his wife; not just not a selfish egotist, and not just not a yes-man. It's someone who is all these things and who on top of that has an acutely tuned sensitivity to just how far he should go in encouraging her, in helping her, in sharing roles.

The greater the similarities between husband-wife expectations over the female duties, the more likely women will be satisfied with their roles (Krause, 1984).

Investigations have found that a mother's enjoyment of working actually relieves stress and satisfies her desires. According to these studies, the

least satisfied mothers are those who must work but prefer to be at home (Rice, 1979). One woman wrote in Rice (1979), "If the mother is completely comfortable about working, her children will be too" (p. 79).

This leads to the benefits experienced by children of working mothers. It is safe to assume that more positive interactions will occur between mother and child when mother is in a good frame of mind. The children also experience a greater level of autonomy, an improved role model, and higher self-esteem due to improved income and the mother's higher sense of self-esteem (Rice, 1979).

Rice summarizes three points to minimize or eliminate negative effects on children of working mothers:

1. Schedule your job to allow maximum contact with children.
2. Devote time to children after work.
3. Involve your husband in childcare.

For mothers who choose to work, the right balance can bring the aforementioned benefits to her and her children. But, many women find it difficult to achieve this balance.

Conflicts Experienced by Working Mothers

Studies indicate that work overload, time shortage, work-family role conflict, and schedule incompatibility are some of the many stressors

experienced by dual-income families (Lewis & Cooper, 1988). Stress can be defined as nonspecific, generalized responses of an individual to a causative factor (McLaughlin & Cormier, 1988).

Some researchers have attempted to assess how dual-income families handle their stress in a positive manner. Alpert and Culbertson (1987) postulated two reasons why dual-career families seem to accept the high stress level:

1. They are extremely tolerant and have been conditioned to high stress levels.

2. Different criteria exist to measure stress.

To measure each person's view of stress, King and Winett (1986) compared stress levels of women between dual-worker families and dual-career families. The most frequently chosen stressor for both groups concerned not having enough time to themselves, while the most frequently chosen response for career women was interference with their living situation. Nonprofessional women less effectively manage their time and have difficulty finding enough time to be with their children. Women working at jobs as opposed to careers, tended to see household duties as their primary responsibility. Both types of working women described an intense amount of stress, although differences in stressors do exist (King & Winett, 1986).

Other studies compared stress levels between men and women. It was hypothesized that women experience a higher level of stress than men in dual-earner families (Yogev, 1986). Despite the fact that today's dual-earner husbands participate more in childcare than in past years, Lewis and Cooper (1988) found that women retain overall executive responsibility in the family and report more pressure than men on seven out of eight items such as conflicting demands of work and family, feelings of guilt and anxiety, and shortage of time in the morning. In 1987, Lewis and Cooper found that in cases where men's and women's roles converged and became equal, both sexes were perceived as having more similar states of mental health. The marital relationship can be an even greater stressor. Two-career couples have the highest divorce rate in the United States (McLaughlin & Cormier, 1988). Lack of time for spouse, lack of emotional support, competition, and attitude towards women's work are cited as problems for these couples (McLaughlin & Cormier, 1988).

Negative correlation exists between positive marital satisfaction and high stress levels (Yogev, 1986). A possible explanation is that if one spouse changes to meet the needs of the other spouse and if improvement is not noted, a sense of inadequacy develops (Yogev, 1986). This does not imply causality,

but there is a potential for the marital relationship to serve as a coping resource for the couple (Yogev, 1986).

It is understandable that love and work are difficult to balance. These two goals tap different psychological impulses. Work seeks achievement; love seeks affiliation (Berg, 1986). Role conflict between love and work could be a possible reason for the increase in coronary heart disease (CHD). This disease is the number one killer for both females and males (Dearborn & Hastings, 1987).

CHD has been correlated with Type A behavior in people. Type A people show greater time urgency, goal directedness, attentional focus, and competitiveness. Several authors have recently noted that employed women are more Type A than are homemakers (Dearborn & Hastings, 1987). Further research is needed to provide a link between Type A women and CHD.

In summary, demographic trends, economic conditions, and social conditions have led women to the working world accompanied by significant personal and social stressors.

One last issue remains to be examined. The use of day-care institutions versus substitute full-time maternal care poses a vigorous debate for working women. Day care that is provided is of particular family importance to mothers today for several reasons

(Dally, 1982):

1. Day care is necessary for those who wish to work outside the home.
2. Day care provides income to those persons who possess those undervalued qualities of motherliness.
3. Day care has the greatest opportunity for improvement and growth of society's attitude of modern mothers.

In the United States, anyone caring for nonrelatives more than 10 hours per week must be licensed (Dally, 1982). Three day-care services exist for parents.

1. Childminders (or babysitters) are paid to look after other people's children in a home setting.
2. Also, nursery schools charge tuition to provide social and cognitive development during the day.
3. A less common arrangement is the employment of nannies and au-pair girls who live in the child's home (Dally, 1982).

In the United States three out of four children are cared for outside of their home (Dally, 1982). Many people are helped by these day-care options, although free 24-hour nurseries proposed by feminists would be the optimal situation. The establishment of such institutions can only be a pipe dream in our nation's current economic position (Dally, 1982).

In summary, in addition to role ambiguity, role

conflict, role overload, anxiety about parent performance, and family tensions, child care issues provide other sources of stress. Finding quality care for children and dealing with popular misconceptions of non-parental care of children are significant sources of stress for working mothers (Hoover & Dunlop, 1981).

In fact, much of the research on maternal employment to date has been motivated by a concern that daily separations from mother will damage the mother-child relationship (Chase-Lansdale & Owens, 1987). "Of primary importance is the finding that a child's attachment to the mother does not appear to be affected by day care" (Hoover & Dunlop, 1981).

The most widely used technique for studying attachment (a feeling that binds a parent and child together) is the Strange Situation (Hoover & Dunlop, 1981). This instrument measures secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-resistant attachments between children and their mothers and fathers who return after separation.

From these studies it has been found that the timing of the resumption of mother's work is a significant factor (Hoover & Dunlop, 1987). It is widely held that an infant's highest attachment relationship to the mother emerges at approximately 7 months of age and continues through approximately 2 years of life (Rice, 1979). If the mother interrupts

the relationship during this period, problems may be apparent in the child's ability to be secure (Hoover & Dunlop, 1987). However, when mothers reenter the labor force earlier in their infant's first year of life, the separation may be less traumatic because it does not disrupt an established bond (Chase-Lansdale & Owen, 1987). In fact, this last approach appears to positively increase the child's level of social interaction (Hoover & Dunlop, 1981).

Coping Strategies

Symptoms of Stress

Some working mothers feel physically, socially, and psychologically stressed. Many women who feel overworked and guilty about their roles rarely take time for self-care (Berg, 1986). Thus, their stress is internal and ongoing. Stress can produce such ailments as neuralgia, headaches, fatigue, numbness, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal symptoms, tingling, depression, and even paralysis (Berg, 1986). As stated earlier, coronary heart disease is the number one killer in the United States. It is disconcerting but not surprising that ulcer medication, hypertension drugs, and tranquilizers are the three largest selling drugs in the United States (Berg, 1986).

Minimizing Stress

Some researchers have attempted to assess how dual-earner couples cope with the stress in their

lives. Coping refers to handling or controlling the effects of a stressful situation (McLaughlin & Cormier, 1988).

Many articles contained specific suggestions for enhancing individual skills, managing time, and providing self-care. Women reported stress reduction with practical suggestions such as these:

1. Communicate with other working mothers
2. Avoid stressful situations
3. Organize a calendar
4. Write things down
5. Remove self from a stressful situation
6. Learn from past experiences
7. Capitalize on high energy times
8. Have a backup sitter
9. Streamline chores
10. Work part-time if possible

Participation in a regular aerobic exercise program has also been proven to reduce anxiety and increase self-efficacy (Long & Haney, 1988).

Within the work context, factors such as long working hours, non-standard or inflexible work schedules may all exacerbate problems of balancing multiple roles. If employees can exercise some control over work schedules and undertake workloads voluntarily, conditions are not inevitably stressful (Lewis & Cooper, 1987). The need for control and

flexibility is evident.

More radical proponents of equality for working women suggest state and federal policy changes.

1. Return to a more agrarian society focusing on the extended family.

2. License for parenthood after providing evidence of training in the care of children.

3. Provide free 24-hour nurseries.

4. Function in business under an ad-hoc system versus organizational flow charts.

5. Establish flex-time employment.

6. Offer time management classes at the place of employment.

The state, unwilling to face these costs, has made virtually no effort to provide this assistance, and in many ways hinders progress in this direction (Dally, 1982). Official policy supports that young people need the care of the mother, but refuses to provide this care. Feminists feel that mothers are caught between the two worlds of idealism and realism.

Therapy

Many working mothers seek therapy due to their heightened stress levels of multiple role responsibilities. Freeman, Logan and McCoy (1987) have instituted an action-oriented as well as an ego-supportive therapeutic approach. They prefer both parents to be present, since the optimal marital

relationship serves as a coping resource. These practitioners assess the working women with an initial interview, a stress questionnaire, and an explicit contract. Based on data gathered from the interview, they established small groups for the purpose of role playing and teaching problem-solving skills. Homework assignments are given to the couple to assess parental application of newly acquired conflict resolution skills.

Informal observations and anecdotal feedback indicate success with this therapeutic approach. The following types of changes have been noted in many female clients (Freeman, Logan, & McCoy, 1987):

1. Less anger, fear, confusion, and stress on post-test questionnaires.
2. Ability to identify own needs.
3. Ability to normalize experiences.
4. Greater creativity and flexibility in problem solving.
5. Improved use of environmental resources.
6. Increased sense of competence in the two roles of work and home.

In conclusion, helping clients mobilize individual and environmental resources has become an increasingly important task for therapists. It is imperative to help women achieve mastery in work and other important role functions.

Single Mothers

The final problem for working women is today's instability of the couple. Roughly, 14 million women head a household with no husband present, while working full time (Jones, 1984). To do this successfully requires even greater personal development, stability, and maturity than women of dual-career families (Dally, 1982). The entire executive responsibility of the family is placed upon the mother who must work for economic reasons. Clearly, women coping with child rearing alone need all the practical assistance they can get. Employment trends which highlight job-sharing schemes, shorter work hours or flex time, and increased leisure opportunities would be beneficial to this group of women (Beck, 1984).

Conclusion

Today, half of all women are participating in the work force and are seeking a more complete integration of work and family responsibilities than ever before. It is extremely important for the mental health of these mothers to be acknowledged and understood. They are trying simultaneously to be a successful person, parent, spouse, and employee. Their stress is not caused by lack of ability to meet reasonable demands, but rather by their inability to meet expectations that even the most energetic and gifted find difficult to achieve. All people involved should help the

individual identify, evaluate, and prioritize the multiple time demands. This process will develop greater personal control as the working woman interrelates her personal, family, and employment worlds.

Statement of Hypothesis

Women of the 90s will continue to maintain executive power in the family while working full time. Because of the familial demand, women experience high stress levels when trying to integrate employment and motherhood. The purpose of the study is to describe the internal and external experiences of women who have children while working full time.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the world of working mothers. This study sought to understand how women balance full-time working with full-time mothering, since it is demanding trying to fulfill both of these roles. The specific concerns of the study included the following:

1. What is it like for these women to be mothers?
2. What are satisfactions and frustrations of mothering?
3. When and why do these women become mothers?
4. What are satisfactions and frustrations of working full time?
5. What types of accommodations do full-time working mothers implement to achieve a balance between work and family?
6. How do children respond to their working mothers?
7. What types of day care options have been employed by working mothers?
8. What would these women like to see changed about their dual roles?
9. What would these women like other people to understand about their experience that no one seems to understand?

The methodology employed in this study was the use

of an informal personal interview. A questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed using general questions, as described above, to facilitate the interview. Each individual responded to all questions. The data derived these responses served as a basis for understanding a woman's world of working and mothering.

Subject Selection

Women included in this study were chosen because they worked 40+ hours per week while caring for at least one child who was 17 years old or younger. Eligible women were located by friends or co-workers who were familiar with the topic under discussion. After names and numbers were submitted to the researcher, the potential participants were contacted by phone. During the phone conversation, the researcher provided information about the nature and purpose of the research study as well as the aspect of confidentiality if one chose to participate. The researcher informed the women of their freedom to refuse participation without pressure being imposed on them. All but one contacted individual agreed to assist in the study. The nonconsenting woman did not have the time to participate in the interview. The researcher and participants then arranged a convenient time and place for the personal interviews.

Description of Sample

The sample consisted of 10 women who worked full time (40+ hours per week) who also had school age children or younger. All of the participants were married at the time of the interview. A summary of the demographic information of the women who participated in the research can be found in Table 1.

The Interview

Interviews were conducted in the homes of the women who volunteered, or in two cases, in their work setting during a convenient time. The interviews were approximately 1 hour in length, with an additional half hour allotted for completion of the demographics form.

Participants were informed that some of the questions were personal and that they had a right to refuse to answer any question asked of them. Prior to the interview, participants were requested to sign a consent form, then each participant was asked to complete the demographics form. Finally, the interview was conducted with only the woman and the researcher present; but during 6 of the 10 interviews, which took place in the home, taping was interrupted by small children wanting mom's attention or teenagers wanting questions answered. After attending to these needs, these mothers arranged for more quiet time.

Table 1

Description of Sample

	Mean	Range
Current Age	35.5 yrs	26 - 43 yrs
Education	16.5 yrs	12 - 20 yrs
Annual Income	\$32,700	\$10,000 - \$59,000
Length of Marriage	12 yrs	4 - 21 yrs
Age at Marriage	23 yrs	21 - 27 yrs
Age at First Conception	30 yrs	22 - 34 yrs
Number of Children	1.7	1 - 3
Age of Children	7 yrs old	3 months - 17 yrs old

NOTE: yrs = years

Data Analysis

The recorded tape for each interview was transcribed. The interviews provided the basis for an analysis of the subjective experience of full-time, working mothers who volunteered to participate in the research study.

Chapter IV

Findings

Much literature exists in which practitioners have attempted to describe a woman's world. Women who "have it all" have various thoughts, feelings, and experiences which are uniquely their own. The individual interviews were conducted in order to explore the experiences of women who choose to mother while working full time.

Mothering

As found in the literature, it is almost predetermined that little girls will grow up to become mothers. So, the first interview question focused on the total mothering experience. What made you decide to become a mother? What is it like to be a mother? Finally, what are the satisfactions and frustrations derived from mothering?

Why Did You Decide to Become a Mother?

Six of the 10 interviewed mothers opened the interview with a common theme: "I always wanted to be a mom."

Being a mom was always the way it should be. It's the happy, American dream. I grew up in a very close family, so I guess I always wanted that and saw myself doing that. My dad had said, "Work is my business, but family is my life."

A mother with an unplanned pregnancy stated:

We hadn't planned this baby. It came 2 years premature, although I always wanted kids more than anything. Probably, because I was raised with a strong family background.

Another mother who was married a second time after becoming a widow, reported on why she had children:

I grew up with that expectation. My career never took precedent. I was ready to become a mother for a new challenge. It was an outgrowth of the husband/wife relationship; a yearning due to our love. The first time we waited 4-1/2 years while we were acquiring material possessions. This postponement helped us to get to know each other, but my husband passed away when Ryan was just 7 weeks old.

Many mothers reported their desire to always become a mother, but with no apparent reasoning. "It was the thing to do." "I always liked kids." "It was the timely thing to do for life to be complete." "My husband wanted a son to carry on his farm." "It was an expression of our love."

What is it Like to be a Mother?

All research participants defined motherhood in terms of extremes. One woman stated:

There are moments that can't compare to anything in terms of how high, happy, and fulfilling they are, and moments of the deepest, saddest moments you've every had. Motherhood represents a spectrum; not all wonderful or all a burden. Delivery and getting to know that child even before the birth develops an instant love relationship.

I wanted to be with the baby always, and I didn't want to share. Being a mother made me appreciate my own mother.

Stephanie was the most positive thing that's ever happened. She brought my husband and I closer together.

It's just a good experience. We enjoyed our kids, but we were ready. There were things in life to get completed before the kids came. When they came, I was ready. It's what marriage is all about. Childless couples are "missing out."

The research participants were asked to share at least two adjectives they would use to describe mothering. These adjectives represented positive and negative attitudes. The responses can be summarized by 11 words: "Motherhood is rewarding, challenging, fulfilling, frustrating, wonderful, gratifying, tiring, overwhelming, crazy, harried, and demanding." Many of the women found it difficult to find two words to describe motherhood.

What Satisfactions Do You Derive From Mothering?

It was evident that being a mother was rewarding and satisfying. All the women responded quickly when asked about the satisfactions derived from mothering.

Women reported:

There is much satisfaction in being needed. It makes me feel good and most satisfied when I meet his emotional and physical needs. His life would be empty; well, I'm not his whole world, but he's dependent on me. I like that.

I like playing with her and being her friend. That is very rewarding.

There are tremendous rewards I derive from Sam and Kate. I would give up my business if I had to, because I don't want to miss out. I would still be happy because it would be my choice.

The biggest satisfaction is the love they share with you. The hugs and words mean a lot.

My happy, well-adjusted kids make me feel like I've accomplished parenting. Seeing their accomplishments like school, sports, and friends help me know I've done something right. It's rewarding to see that you're developing a unique human being. The kisses are nice too.

It's neat watching them grow. You see that in what they say, do, and remember. Kids are like sponges; they soak up so much to get a foundation. It's also rewarding knowing I've been instrumental in teaching them good and bad.

It's interesting to watch them grow and develop and become a unique person who is functioning and independent. There's a real sense of satisfaction that maybe you have done everything right; things are falling into place; worries are now coming together. I provided structure, opportunities, expectations, and philosophies. Kids pick and choose, and end with an end result.

I have enjoyed watching my kids grow and develop into who they are today. You see things forming that appear lasting values.

Finally,

It's incredible to give life and to share with my husband. As Stephen gets older, I will see him grow into a unique individual. Right now, he's nice to take care of and have around.

All mothers seemed to think of mothering as a very rewarding and humbling experience. The pervasive theme

was the contribution to developing a unique human being with lasting values. This "final product" seems to validate the work they have done during the formative years.

What Frustrations Do You Experience From Mothering?

Like satisfactions, mothering can also bring frustrations. Frustrations were defined as the "different things about being a mother." One woman reported the fear of breaking ties:

It will be hard to cut the apron string and watch him grow older. I know that at some point I will not be able to control. He will think for himself, and he should. It will just be hard for me. He's already at an age where he doesn't want to spend time with Mom. He prefers his friends. Another frustrating time was his first 6 weeks of life when he was colicky. He was crabby, and he wouldn't breast feed.

One principal of an elementary school has a difficult time with behavioral disappointments from her own children:

It's frustrating when they disappoint you and don't live up to your expectations. So far, that's only occurred in behavioral terms.

Since all the research participants worked full time, time-management problems were, by far, the overwhelming frustrations by these mothers. Eight of the 10 women who participated in the research found time-management issues vital:

I never knew how much time it would take. He (a newborn) demands time constantly. He needs my attention and care. Balancing is

tough. Something needs to give--school, work, or parenting. It's a difficult time for me right now.

TIME! I've given up having a straight, clean house. With running teenagers, something had to give. My kids became my priority.

The extreme lack of time. We've had to put our husband/wife needs on the back burner as well as my personal needs. I don't do it begrudgingly. You just have to think in terms of deferment.

There's not as much time as I want. I'm tired. I've always worked.

Trying to balance work with kids is difficult. I feel I'm missing out. My kids are also close in age which may take time away from the other. My attention is divided. Next time, I would wait longer to have kids further apart.

Being a mom is more than we thought. It's time-consuming. There's not enough time for my husband.

Two women reported a frustration with having to go back to work:

I didn't want to go back to work when the time came. No one can raise your child the way you can.

I prefer to stay home. I hate having to leave her, but there's much financial difference. Now is not how I'd like to be. I'm sad. Sad songs make me cry during the day. If she's happy, then I can do it.

In American society, it seems almost necessary for two parents to work, although many child-care issues arise and frustrations result as discussed above. After exploring the women's experiences with mothering, their second full-time role was examined--working woman.

Working

What Satisfactions Do You Derive From Working?

One of the questions on the demographic questionnaire asked women why they work. Eight of the 10 women reported money as the prime motivator to continue working. Some women help pay bills while other women's incomes enable the family to have luxuries. Although these women work for the money, they also reported self-satisfaction that is derived from working:

I love what I do. I'm good at it, and I like being my own boss. I'm a better mom when I work. An article from Parents magazine helped me realize that mothers who stay at home have guilt too. They feel they're not cooking and baking enough.

I like my job. I don't have to work, but I feel it rewards me, because I have something to contribute to the field of education. I look forward to work each day.

I like being out of the home and with other people. Doing something worthwhile makes me feel whole. I would feel house-bound if I stayed home. I experienced that during maternity leave.

An occupational therapist who works with children in a public school setting and at an agency part time reported:

I enjoy my job because I see improvements in my kids (students). It is also an outlet to see people and make good friends. The parent support is validating.

Another woman voiced a strong opinion in somewhat

defiant terms against the older generation's norm:

My life is more fulfilling than my mom's. I'm not interested in that day in/day out routinized devotion to family the way mom was. I'm devoted, but in a different way. I enjoy being on the go with time away from my husband and the routine. I have always enjoyed work.

Days fly by with all my new opportunities. I'm fortunate to make my own schedule to do therapy and to teach at Washington University. No one knows when I'm home or working.

And finally, a mother who needs to work for financial reasons described the experience as that which helps self-actualize:

I like earning money to support the family. Also, it helps me figure out who I am when I'm around other adults. I need to work to give me purpose.

What Frustrations Do You Experience from Working?

Frustration results due to lack of flexibility in many of the research participant's work schedule. The women who participated in the research project appeared frustrated when they discussed the balancing act between work and family:

I miss peaceful mornings. The morning is so stressful because it's rushed. I have so much to do before I get to work at 8:00 a.m.

Two other women wholeheartedly agreed with this morning scenario. They start their day at 5:15 a.m.

My work is not flexible in hours, and therefore does not help when my husband's schedule conflicts with mine. They give me heat when the baby's sick. The ideal situation would be a job more on my terms.

Someone once said, "There's not enough hours in the day." This seems to be the working woman's motto. Five of the 10 women who participated in the interview felt the length of the day should be extended.

There's not enough hours in the day, so I have to cut out something. It requires standing up to and facing some people--either my boss or two little kids.

I'm on high gear. I eat, drive, talk, and walk fast.

I have two demanding part-time jobs which make my life pretty hectic. The time factor is also something I'm trying to combat.

Accommodations

With women who have continued to cling to the American Dream (integrating a career and family), a balance between these two important priorities was found to be a necessity in the 70s and this necessity continues into the 90s. The women who contributed to this research study shared their types of accommodations they implement to achieve a balance between work and family.

I had a hard time admitting that I couldn't keep up.

I'm a perfectionist that wants my life to run like a sewing machine, and its just not possible.

These were remarks made by two research participants. These women and the other 8 women talked of their difficulties in achieving a balance between work and

family. All of the women seem to have achieved balance after a few years of struggling, although 2 women specifically stated that "some days the balance feels good; other days it doesn't."

Two adaptations were repeatedly mentioned by several of the women. First, the greater the similarities over husband-wife roles, the greater the ease will exist in the woman's world of integrating work and family. Ideal husbands are hard to find, although "helpful" husbands seem to be the key when a woman balances multiple roles as reported by 6 of the 10 research participants. Helpful was defined as a 50/50 husband, one who contributes 50% to household/family functioning. Some specific tasks mentioned by the women include grocery shopping, attending children's functions, carpooling, and cooking.

Secondly, organization is another key to success for the research participants. One woman reported, "We're like an assembly line at bath time." According to 4 of the 10 women, organization encompasses having a consistent morning routine, planning out meals before shopping, executing all errands in one day, and carpooling.

The following list is a summary of other accommodations utilized by some of the women in this study to help balance their roles.

1. Make two dinners on Tuesday and Thursday.
2. Do morning necessities at night.
3. Utilize teenage children to help around the house.
4. Organize school materials at night.
5. Make fast meals or have each family member feed themselves.
6. Decrease hours at the workplace by doing paperwork at home.
7. Do things for yourself.
8. Maximize services of extended family.

As mentioned above, utilizing the extended family is one means to an end. This leads us to a discussion of day care issues.

Day Care

Finding quality care for children is a significant source of stress for many mothers returning to work. When the research participants were asked to describe their experiences with day care, all of the 10 mothers reported generally positive experiences:

I looked while I was pregnant. Many day cares won't take kids under 1 year old. That was a big hassle. Another pregnant friend recommended a retired nurse who ended up being affordable and flexible. The drive is inconvenient, but I trust the situation.

I used a lady in our neighborhood, then at 2 years old, Brian went to preschool. Kyle (her other son) was in an ideal situation for a while, then she said she wanted full-time kids, so I found another sitter.

Another research participant was offered a wonderful opportunity while she worked on her doctoral program while her kids were young:

I didn't want to put my kids into day care, so I didn't take the Ph.D. program. Then, a neighbor came over and applied to be a nanny for me. She was very flexible and allowed me to finish my education. When we moved to Missouri, my daughter went to a good Montessori preschool before kindergarten.

I've had one lady the whole time. I found her from a friend. She's been reliable, although my son was picking up combative behavior, so I put him in a Montessori preschool one-half of the day. This has been very expensive, but a good balance for him.

A psychometrist reported:

I used a grandmotherly figure in her home. She worked extremely well with the kids by providing care, structure, limits, positive experiences, and activities. They made things all the time.

Now, since she spends her work hours testing kids for disabilities, she recommends at least 1 year of preschool for social skills and school expectations.

One of the interviewees utilizes a neighbor who is incorporated, which enables her to deduct childcare from yearly taxes.

In summary, child care issues were important to all the mothers in this research. They agreed that a good day-care situation is essential for ease of mind, and thus daily work satisfaction.

One mother states, "Parents should go with their

gut feelings on child care workers." In support of that statement, one mother, who was not pleased with the preschool her child was attending, withdrew her child after the preschool teacher said her daughter had left two hours earlier. The teacher was confusing two different children who had the same names. This preschool horror story may suggest that day care could be a threatening situation.

Children's Responses

As stated in Chapter 2, an infant's highest attachment relationship to the mother emerges at approximately 7 months of age, and continues through 2 years of life. In this study, most children of the interviewed mothers started with some type of day care service 6 weeks after birth. Given those data, children should not have experienced significant separation anxiety.

Eight of the 10 mothers reported their children displayed no symptoms of distress when mom left for work:

There are no memorable complaints or questions about why I work.

After a long weekend, Sam might ask to stay home, but generally he can't wait to see his sitter.

At first, she cried a lot. Now, she is okay. The sitter greets her with a hug every day.

The remaining two mothers reported opposing views:

I see a difference when I get home at night. Both of the kids are starving for attention when I try to fix dinner and bathe them. They are fussy and cry a lot.

During preschool years, there was never an issue at day care, but at Kindergarten they had to "peel Jennifer off my leg." This went on for a few weeks.

Three of the research participants seemed to experience more separation anxiety than their children. One mother had "bad feelings" but knew that's what she needed to do. The week prior to the interview was one mother's first experience with leaving her newborn with a sitter. She became emotional during the interview:

I don't feel I'm doing what I should. It's my decision, I should take the responsibility for him.

Finally, one research participant rationalized potential guilt feelings by reverbaling her desire to work, "You have to want to do it to make everything bearable."

Future Plans

Research participants were asked to describe what they saw different about their life 5 years from now. Answers radically varied depending on the age of their children.

Mothers of young children will strive toward more flexible hours or part-time work while continuing to have more children.

I hope to have a second child. We're trying now. I hope to not be working, but if I am, I would like school hours.

I hope to get my new company going to have days off and just work nights.

With more raises on my husband's end, sometime I'll be able to cut working to part time. I hope to accommodate Nicky's school situation. I want to see her on and off the bus, and look at her papers. We're talking ideal job hours like 9:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

My life's a little too crazy right now. I have to find a better balance and time for me. Cut down hours to half-time somehow.

As children age, mother's perspectives appear to change. These parents saw more independence coming with new drivers in the family:

Brian will drive to his sporting events, thus freeing me up. I'd like to go back to school.

My son driving will free me up, but my daughter's aging will require more time because of sports. I'll be very busy with her and less busy with him.

One research participant hopes mothering will become easier:

I hope it's easier. I think it will be if the trend continues. I hope to not need to be intimately or physically involved as much.

The aging of her child was evidenced when he made her aware of his need for independence:

Mom, when I was younger, I used to wish you were home when I got home from school. Now I'm older, I don't want that anymore. I like coming home and having space and time to myself--to do things at my leisure like chores and snacks.

Two mothers admitted having anxiety over the increased independence of their children:

I can't understand why people can't wait to have kids leave home. I don't have a feel for that at all. It will be hard to cut apron strings with Ryan. I hope to renew relationships with my husband and friends since I'll have more time.

Letting my son go will be tough. I hope to see him marry someone good.

Concluding Comments

By the conclusion of the interview, the research participants had shared an abundance of personal feelings, thoughts, and experiences. The session was ended with the sharing of any comments about being "a woman" that the women felt were uniquely their own, that had not been previously mentioned.

Responses to this part of the interview were strongly communicated. Five of the research participants declared:

Our worst enemy is other women. We feel we have to defend our choice to work or stay home--shouldn't have to. This is right for me.

There are no right answers. I don't believe we can have it all--a good marriage, career, and kids. It's no bed of roses trying to achieve it. You need high energy and to be able to go on 6 hours of sleep a night.

I don't think you can do it all. I can't imagine having a rigid job and an unhelpful husband, and still having and quality life for yourself and kids.

It is still a woman's world even as liberated as my husband is. He knows he can "count on me" to pick up the kids, change diapers, and

stay home with sick kids. It makes me very angry when he doesn't realize how much I contribute.

Working women are not given credit. We're actually the "heroes of today." Stay-at-home moms who complain of boredom make me angry. Our health and our own personal being suffers to the point that we look in the mirror and we don't know who we are, because we give so much to our family, jobs, and kids.

In contrast to the frustrated feelings experienced above, one mother knows she cannot have it all, but opts for complete motherhood:

I had no idea how much I wanted to stay home and how irrelevant the rest of the world is. You can work and have kids; but you really must want to, and you have to be ready.

Chapter V

Discussion

This study has examined women in our society who are faced with two simultaneous roles of working and being a mother. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of a woman's world of work and motherhood and how women maintain a balance between these powerful dual roles.

The hypothesis of this study is that women continue to maintain executive power in the family while working full time. Because of the demands of integrating these two roles of mothering and working, women have high stress levels. By their responses, the women in this study have confirmed this expectation.

This exploratory study was undertaken to add to our knowledge and understanding of the 90s woman based on the quality of life of the women involved. The intent of the study was twofold: (1) to explore a woman's world of dual roles, and (2) to discover how women make the duality work.

Why Women Mother

No biological explanation of mothering was not supported by the interviewed women, however, the social context theory (Chodorow, 1978) was upheld. As evidenced by the research findings, gender roles continue to be assigned by society. Many of the women

reported following role models in their families. This is referred to as role training or cognitive role learning. The acquisition of gender roles will continue until society is restructured, so that every individual has the freedom to fulfill his/her own intrinsic nature.

Benefits Experienced by Working Mothers

The interviewed mothers love to mother and love to work. They find many frustrations, but have learned to accommodate and make it work. This integration is a necessity for 52% of the female population (Berg, 1986).

In contrast to the literature, outside employment does not seem to buffer the effects of role overload. These women did not mention solace in working. They like to work, but employment appears to be viewed as an obstacle which needs to be as flexible as possible.

The research participants did report that their occupations provided four of the five functions of employment: provides income, regulates activity, gives self-identify, and decreases isolation. Since these four functions have been met, it might be assumed that these mothers had increased self-esteem. In the opinion of this researcher, these research participants did display a high level of confidence.

As found in the literature, the interviewed women

are more satisfied as equitable roles develop in the marriage.

Conflicts Experienced by Working Mothers

All of the women in the study reported negative feelings of being challenged, harried, and frustrated. This indicates that work overload, time shortage, and schedule incompatibility are stressors experienced by these women as well as women in the literature. It was apparent that the women in this study have become tolerant of and conditioned to high stress levels, since they are continuing to integrate employment and motherhood in light of the negative components.

None of the research participants compared their stress levels to their husband's stress level, but many did imply that in today's world, women retain overall executive responsibility in the family. This was communicated by reporting conflicting demands of work and family, feelings of guilt, and shortage of time in the morning. This supports the hypothesis outlined in the Introduction. It can be assumed that these women would report more pressure than men.

Day Care

Finding quality care for children is significant as a source of stress for most working mothers. Nine of the 10 women in this study had all positive experiences to share. These women utilized substitute

full-time maternal care versus day care institutions. A conclusion, which is substantiated by this research project, can be drawn that mothers look for a safe environment with low numbers of children. Many of the women found child-care workers who were retired nurses or teachers, and many of the women withdrew their child(ren) from the worker's home when the caretaker acquired more than four children. Therefore, the norm is to utilize several child-care workers before the child enters Kindergarten. It was mentioned that social skills and school expectations may be increased by having children attend preschool 1 year prior to Kindergarten.

Effect on Children of Working Mothers

All research participants resumed work after their maternity leave. According to Hoover and Dunlop (1981), these mothers resumed working at a good time. They speculate that a child will have increased reactions to separation between 7 to 24 months of age.

The mothers reported few negative children's reactions, although they strive hard to minimize any possible negative effects. This research study found mothers executing three strategies that Rice (1979) recommends to minimize or eliminate negative effects on children of working mothers:

1. Devote time to children after work.

2. Involve husband in child care.
3. Work flexible hours to maximize contact with children.

In fact, as found in this study, older children enjoy time alone as well as the economic benefits. One might conclude that children of working mothers do experience a greater level of autonomy. Also, dual income families are able to provide more experiences which are considered luxuries that will increase the child's level of self-esteem.

"Of primary importance is that a child's attachment to the mother does not appear to be affected by day care" (Hoover & Dunlop, 1981). This finding was substantiated by the women in the research project.

Coping Strategies

Since economic and social situations have thrown women into important dual roles, one must make accommodations to help integrate these two jobs. The women in the research project did report high stress levels but attempted to minimize the stress as the literature suggests:

1. Self-care
2. Organization
3. Streamlined chores
4. Flexible work hours
5. Back-up caretakers

Eight of the 10 women participated in daily exercise which has been proven to reduce anxiety and increase self-efficacy.

The real answer lies in restructuring gender roles. Since this does not seem practical, restructuring employment might provide the answer. Free 24-hour nurseries, ad-hoc business functions, flex-time employment, and time management classes are viable suggestions proposed by radical proponents of equality for working women.

Installation of these changes would be costly, and at this point, states are unwilling to face these costs. So, mothers will continue to be caught between their two worlds of idealism and realism, while society secretly hopes she holds it together. Women have secured their place in the world of work, but the aforementioned mothering issues will continue to hinder progress toward her highest quality of life possible.

Evaluation of Research Procedure

In this study, an informal personal interview was used to collect the data. This method was chosen to acquire a descriptive analysis of women's experiences with simultaneous working and mothering. With this subjective approach, the richness, uniqueness, and complexity of women's lives could be analyzed in terms of the information received from the volunteers of the

research. All of the interviews were recorded on audio cassettes so that the researcher's full attention could be directed to the respondent.

The allotted 1 hour time frame for the interview proved to be adequate. An additional half hour was needed to complete the demographics form (Appendix B). The personal interview (see Questionnaire, Appendix C) provided the respondents an opportunity to share issues in privacy.

Due to the personal nature of some of the questions, care was exercised during the interview process. It was necessary to provide an empathic and inviting atmosphere in order to enable participants to share in a non-threatening way. Finally, patience and efficiency were exercised by the researcher, to accommodate busy schedules of the volunteers.

Suggestions for Further Research

The intent of this study was to examine the subjective experience of a woman's work. Consequently, little consideration was given to the experiences of a man's world. Many conclusions were implied, but an interview with the partners may have confirmed or denied the implications as well as clarified other aspects of the study. In regard to children's responses to working mothers, interviewing the older children of the mothers may have provided more

information about their feelings.

Also, a valid generalization to the American population based on my "representative sampling" design is minimal. The research participants resembled the natural diversity found in the target population (college educated, full-time working mothers); however, attempts to intuitively "represent" the population limits generalization. An acceptable substitute would be systematic random sampling of volunteers. Finally, the absence of quantitative summaries makes the research vulnerable to biased impressions on the researcher's part.

Appendix A**Consent Form**

Name of Participant _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Title of Project: **Options and Limits in a Woman's World**

1. Teresa Davis, who is a candidate for a master's degree at Lindenwood College, has requested my participation in a research study at this institution. The title of the research is: Options and Limits in a Woman's World.
2. I understand the purpose of the study is to explore the world of a working mother.
3. My participation will involve an individual informal conversational interview for approximately one and one-half hours. I understand that my participation in the personal interview will be voluntary. I also understand that some of the questions will be personal and that Teresa Davis, a therapist in training, will be available to discuss the reactions and responses to the questionnaire.
4. I understand that my name will not be used in this

study and that any details which might identify me to another reader will be disguised. All tapes will be for the researcher's use exclusively, and they will be erased or destroyed immediately following transcription.

5. I understand that my participation in this research study may be extremely valuable to others who have experienced a similar event or will experience it in the future. I also understand that there are no direct benefits to me that are anticipated.
6. I understand that I have the right to omit responding to individual questions during the interview and that I may withdraw from the research study at any time.
7. It is not the policy of Lindenwood College to compensate me or provide medical treatment for me in the event the research results in injury.
8. Any questions that I have concerning the research study or my participation in it, before or after my consent, will be answered by Teresa Davis.
9. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty to me. I also understand that I may withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty or prejudice.

10. I have read the above statements and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I believe I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential risks and benefits that are involved. I hereby give my informed and free consent to be a participant in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date: _____

Appendix B

Demographics

Name _____

Home Phone _____ Current Age _____

Address _____

1. Marital Status (Circle one):

a. Married b. Divorced

c. Re-married d. Single

Age at which you were first married: _____

Number of years married: _____

2. Number of children: _____

Age(s) of child(ren): _____

Age of you _____ and your husband _____

when you first conceived.

3. Try to describe your and your husband's family-timing attitude (Circle one):

a. Parenthood was not to be decided; children came when they were conceived.

b. A two to three year deferment of parenthood was essential to give us time to enjoy each other.

c. Parenthood was put off until many of our career goals were met.

d. My husband and I strongly disagreed about family timing.

4. Ethnic Group (Circle one):
- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| a. American Indian | b. Asian |
| c. Afro-American | d. Hispanic |
| e. White, non-Hispanic | f. Other (specify) |
-

5. Occupation: _____
Husband's occupation: _____

6. Education (Circle one):
- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a. Grade school | b. High school |
| c. Vocational school | d. College (Number of
years) _____ |

7. Annual Income (Circle one):
- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| a. \$1,000 to \$9,999 | b. \$10,000 to \$19,999 |
| c. \$20,000 to \$29,999 | d. \$30,000 to \$39,999 |
| e. \$40,000 to \$49,999 | f. \$50,000 to \$59,999 |
| g. \$60,000 to \$69,999 | h. \$70,000 and above |

8. Briefly describe why you work:

9. How long have you been in the work force?

Have you taken any breaks from the work force?

- a. Yes b. No

Why did your breaks from the work force occur?

10. At what age did your child(ren) start receiving some type of day care services (Circle one):
- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| a. 6 to 12 months old | b. 1 to 2 years old |
| c. 2 to 3 years old | d. 3 to 4 years old |
| e. 4 to 5 years old | f. 5 to 6 years old |
| g. Older than 6 years of age | |
11. How long did your child(ren) remain in day care?
-
12. Do you subscribe to any parent groups and/or publications?
- a. Yes b. No If yes, please describe:
-
-
-
13. Do you feel you participate as an equal partner with your husband in making decisions regarding your child(ren)?
- a. Yes b. No
14. What recreational activities do you participate in at least weekly?
-
-

15. How does your child(ren) contribute to household chores?

Appendix C

Questionnaire

Much literature exists in which practitioners have attempted to describe a woman's world. I have read about women who "have it all," and I would like to explore your current experience. Different women have various thoughts, feelings, and experiences, so it is important that you realize that your ideas, your experiences, your thoughts, and your feelings are uniquely your own, and these are what I am interested in. Your experiences do not have to fit any preconceived ideas belonging to anyone else. I am interested in your experiences and perceptions.

1. What is it like to be a mom?
2. What satisfactions do you derive from mothering?
3. What frustrations do you experience from mothering?
4. What made you decide to become a mother?
5. What satisfactions do you derive from working?
6. What frustrations do you experience from working?
7. Describe how you accommodate work and family.
8. How do your children respond to your working?
9. Describe your experiences with day care.
10. Describe what you see different about your life 5 years from now.
11. Please share any comments about being a woman that

you feel are uniquely your own, that have not be included in the above questions.

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