**A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TOWARD UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSITION**

**FROM CAREER TO FULLTIME MOTHERHOOD**


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(ABSTRACT)

The dissertation begins by discussing the essence of the current study, which sought to accurately portray the experiences and realities of fulltime mothers, followed by a comprehensive literature review surrounding issues pertinent in motherhood. Subsequently, an explanation of the methodological approach utilized in the current study is provided, in addition to the overview of a pilot study which exemplified potential themes, obstacles, and assets anticipated within the actual research. The case studies of four women chosen to represent issues relevant to fulltime mothers are presented. Finally, the creation of a substantive Stay-at-home-mothering (i.e., SAHM) Model is offered, along with two SAHM portraits and a conclusion section, which includes an implications section along with an exploration of the personal discoveries made by the current researcher.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

*Introduction to Motherhood*

There are many intricate dynamics involved with fulltime (i.e., "stay-at-home,"

"domestic") mothers.  To understand the many facets involved with domestic mothers, it is

appropriate to review the concept of motherhood itself.  Motherhood is a complex role, an

experience full of responsibilities and varying emotions.  Lindsey (1997) discussed the pressures

women face before becoming mothers.  Starting in childhood, direct and indirect messages are

bestowed upon girls, indicating that their maternal destinies have been predetermined.  As

females mature, such messages continue; motherhood is a societal role that requires complete

devotion, including the sacrifice of women's own needs and desires.  Women who choose to

work outside of the home in order to maintain their identities, establish mental and social

stimulation, or earn a living are risk-takers, as this decision tends to create guilt (Bee, 1992).

Santrock (1997) describes the other side of this double-edged sword: Women who decide

to stay at home with their children are perceived to be intellectually inferior and live without the

prestigious reputations possessed by women who maintain their careers.  Moreover, a general

assumption of motherhood is an effortless extension of a women's being; not only should women

desire their maternal statuses, but the transition is usually thought of as a natural, graceful shift.

When the realities and responsibilities of motherhood finally emerge, mothers can become

depressed and feel like they failed themselves, their families, and society (Lindsey, 1997).

Oberman and Josselson (1996) further assess that when research focuses around mothers,

there are many misconceptions that ensue.  For example, mothers fall at one end of an extreme

dyadic category (e.g., nurturing or neglectful), whereas in reality most mothers fall somewhere in

the middle of such a continuum. Interestingly, Oberman and Josselson (1996) believe that assigning the experience of motherhood to be somewhere along the lines of such a continuum is also inadequate, as mothers often experience a range of daily emotions (e.g., happiness and disappointment). Rather, Oberman and Josselson (1996) propose a theory that describes motherhood in terms of a webbed matrix, an obscurely elaborate set of thoughts and experiences that are enmeshed and interwoven, rather than falling along a linear sequence.

The model created by Oberman and Josselson (1996), termed the *Matrix of Tensions,* is separated into six categories. The first of these, *Loss of Self Versus Expansion of Self,* is the oscillation mothers experience from having a baby, in which they fluctuate between feelings that they have lost independence and feelings that they have created human life. Loss of self results in feelings of fatigue from the physical demands of mothering, including a loss of sleep and an inability to spend quality time with their friends, their spouses, and themselves. Expansion of self results in an overwhelming sense that they have created something grand, that they have produced an extension of themselves and will always be connected to their babies, even as their babies grow older and become autonomous in their own rights.

During the second phase of the model, *Experience of Omnipotence Versus Experience of Liability,* mothers often take both the blame and/or recognition for their children's successes and failures. Society places the powerful responsibility of a child's behavior onto the mother. Likewise, power is distributed to the mother from the children themselves, who view the mother as having the authority to control their lives. Such responsibility and accountability over another person's life can give mothers a necessary sense of control, while at the same time offer overwhelming and uncontrollable emotions (Oberman & Josselson, 1996).

*Life Destruction Versus Life Promotion* is the third stage of the theory described by Oberman and Josselson (1996).  In this stage, mothers alternate from feeling awestruck that they were able to give life to their child to feeling disappointment and even fury toward their offspring.  For many reasons, mothers are almost solely responsible for the welfare and eventual character of their children.  Because of this power and responsibility, as described earlier, the mother can become infuriated, and even violent, when the child does not behave in accordance to her wishes.

The fourth stage of *The Matrix of Tensions*, termed *Maternal Isolation Versus Maternal Community,* circulates around the fact that many mothers whose worlds revolve around their children feel a sense of solitude and loneliness.  Whereas they once had a network of social connectedness, their social life is now limited to their children, or revolves around the needs of their children.  Many mothers feel a sense of community with other mothers, who can understand their needs and frustrations, as well as provide them with their social desires (Oberman & Josselson, 1996).

*Cognitive Strategies Versus Intuitive Responses* is the fifth stage of the model described by Oberman and Josselson (1996).  Mothering requires a great number of methodological approaches to help deal with the demands of raising children.  Mothers spend tremendous amounts of time in rational, logical thought in regard to what are the best interests of their children.  Likewise, mothers intuitively feel their children's needs on a spontaneous level, and act on such instinctual levels accordingly.

The last stage of The Matrix of Tensions, termed *Maternal Desexualization Versus Maternal Sexualization* explains that there exists a range of beliefs toward mothers' sexualities.  On the one hand, mothers are completely desexualized, operating from the unspoken rule that

they should deny their sexual urges.  A contrasting view is that the ability to mother children is the most sexual experience in itself.  Additionally, according to Psychodynamic Theory, it is believed that the physical demands of motherhood are indeed sexual in nature (e.g., breastfeeding), and should be viewed as polymorphous perversion, which is consequentially sexually pleasing toward the child (Galt, 1941). Again, the mother's attitude toward such interludes are ignored and are not addressed from a sexual perspective.

*Statement of the Problem*

According to the research literature, there are a number of excessive demands required of fulltime (i.e., domestic) mothers.  In addition to the weighty decision of whether to reenter the workforce or stay at home with the children, domestic mothers face a daily array of obstacles that differ from those of their working counterparts (Hochschild, 1989).  In particular, the psychological and emotional well being of domestic mothers is oftentimes strained.  When deciding to pursue a life path (e.g., a particular career and/or beginning a family), it is essential for people to understand the joyful fulfillments in addition to the realities, hardships, and demands.  Such comprehensive preparations alert individuals that problems are inevitable, and sustain them through such encounters.  The current research intended to generate such preparations.

Tulman and Fawcett (1991) conducted a longitudinal study to evaluate the normalcy of mother's schedules after the birth of their child.  The women interviewed in this study indicated that before the birth of their child, knowledge of the realistic trials and tribulations involved with mothering would have been advantageous.  Thus, the current problem that the research presented below has sought to resolve is not the process of bearing children in itself (i.e., becoming a mother), but the lack of knowledge and information about the realities that fulltime mothers

confront.  Therefore, at the outset this study will help fulltime mothers be better equipped to understand their eventual setbacks and work with them rather than happen upon them without warning.

*Health Risks, Employment, and Domestic Work*

Included in the information that this research will impart to both career and fulltime mothers are the health-related risks (e.g., psychological, physical) associated with corresponding employment statuses.  Hibbard and Pope (1991) conducted a longitudinal study related to the morbidity and mortality rates correlated to women with many roles (e.g. mother, spouse, and work roles).  Women who were employed for substantial periods of time had increased life spans over the women who were unemployed, by an astonishing 70%.  The additional role of "mother" to an already employed woman provided further health benefits, in that it decreased the number of heart problems experienced by the women.  However, unemployed mothers had an increased probability of having strokes.  There were neither health benefits nor drawbacks for men based on their parental status.

Hibbard and Pope (1991) reviewed the literature regarding nurturing roles and concluded that these roles were very stressful positions.  Women who spend their lives in such roles (e.g., the caregiver to children or elderly parents) place themselves in the way of numerous health risks, including social isolation.  On the other hand, employed mothers are able to take a break from their caregiving duties, socialize with other adults and colleagues, and thus reduce such endangerments.  In agreement with this notion, Matlin (1996) states that among other benefits, women who work lead healthier lives and experience pleasure and exhilaration as a result of their multiple roles (e.g., mother, worker).

Barnett and Marshall (1992) suggested that mothers who are not employed suffer from lower levels of psychological welfare because they do not have the cushioning available to employed mothers who are happy and successful in their careers, which in turn improves familial relationships.  This phenomenon seems to occur regardless of the age and developmental level of the child (e.g., preschool, college), and takes place despite the mother's marital status (e.g., married, divorced, separated, single).

Lindsey (1997) describes unemployment as being a determinant to mental health.  From a psychological perspective, work that takes place outside of the home can have tremendous benefits; it affects a person from emotional (e.g., depression) and mental (e.g., stimulation, self worth) perspectives, and it promotes general feelings of satisfaction.  Furthermore, employment is advantageous from a grander sociological perspective, especially in Western cultures where people identify their self worth through employment.  In sum, the lack of information regarding the fulltime motherhood experience results in unrealistic expectations and/or health problems.

*Background of the Problem*

Included among the multifaceted intricacies involved with motherhood are the many choices women who experience this developmental milestone (i.e., motherhood) make.  One profound decision, in particular, is the decision mothers make between staying home after the birth of their children and returning to the workforce.  There are many factors involved in a decision of such magnitude.

Simon (1995) conducted a study involving gender differences in relation to the various roles that belong to parents (e.g., their parenting roles, their employment roles).  The author found a significant difference in perceived obligations: Men felt that their responsibility was to be the familial "breadwinner" and take care of financial concerns, whereas women felt that their

foremost duty was to tend to the needs of their families.  Additionally, mothers tended to feel guilty when they focused on other areas, such as their careers.  This feeling was reiterated by their husbands.  Eventually, these tensions crossed over into their marriages.

According to Simon (1995), men also felt the constraints of their wives' employment, and their levels of depression became more prevalent.  To generalize these two concepts, women felt that their principal obligations were to act as caretaker to their husbands and children.  When issues were not resolved smoothly, husbands and wives mutually agreed that the wife should be faulted.

There are many developmental issues which affect a mother's decision to stay at home or return to work, including the enrollment of her children in daycare facilities.  Most of the research focuses on the development of the child.  Santrock (1997) discusses the influence such decisions can have on the developing child.  The author asserts that mothers employed in occupations can, in fact, play a role in the career development of children, particularly little girls.  Seeing their mothers in employed positions can influence their eventual career paths by making them aware of their limitless options.

Because of concern for the development of the child, an impassioned debate ensues regarding daycare issues. This debate surround whether nonmaternal care (e.g., daycare centers) negatively affect developmental issues with the child (e.g., attachment).  Bee (1992) addresses this ever-present issue by outlining the pros and cons of the research findings.  The positive side of daycare enrollment points to the cognitive stimulation and socialization that occur when children are able to interact with their peers in a structured learning environment.  This contradicts traditional view that an absent mother contributes to insecure attachments by not formulating the mother-child bond, which in turn negatively affects the child throughout his or

her life.  Another aspect of the daycare dilemma is described by Atkinson and Hackett (1995).  It involves the financial constraints daycare assistance may place on a mother.  As opposed to other countries (e.g., most of Europe), American daycare can be quite expensive and can be the ultimate predictor in whether or not a child stays at home.

Considering the numerous factors involved with the decision processes of mothers (i.e., working and fulltime), it is not surprising that feelings of guilt were inevitable, particularly if the mother chose to become employed.  Predictably, the blame that is associated with such a phenomenon is invariably placed solely on the mother, an occurrence that dates back to earlier historical periods and has endured over the years.  A theoretical Jungian concept, titled "The Mother Complex," refers to personality developments which result from mother-child interactions taking place during the formative years (Hall & Lindzey, 1978).  Those with strong, overriding mothers are said to have significant mother complexes, in that their mothers continually govern their thoughts and behaviors throughout life.  It is essential to note the emphasis that is placed on the mother as opposed to other potential caregivers.

*Study Objectives*

The purpose of this study was to examine from a qualitative perspective the dynamics involved with domestic mothers transitioning from the workforce.  Such analyses and observations included those from the mothers' perspectives, and included both their rewards, hardships, and the overall changes that had taken place since the birth of their children and simultaneous loss of employment status.  The following themes served as a guideline to direct the course of the interviews, which were ultimately directed by the participants:

1.  An understanding of the decision-making process involved with fulltime mothering (e.g., "Discuss people that may or may not have affected your decision.").

2.  A description of the realities involved with being a fulltime mother (e.g., "How have your responsibilities stayed the same? How have they differed?").

3.  The altering of self-concept conditions, upon transitioning into fulltime motherhood (e.g., "How has your self-concept changed since becoming a fulltime mother?").

4.  Changes surrounding family relationships/spousal dynamics based upon their transition into fulltime motherhood (e.g., "Do you feel you are viewed differently by your family since becoming a fulltime mother?").

5.  Changes surrounding community relationships based on their transition into fulltime motherhood (e.g., "Do you feel you are viewed differently by your community?").

6.  Outside messages that affect the fulltime mother's decision/experience (e.g., "How does our society cater to fulltime mothers?").

*Significance of the Study*

Existing literature regarding mothers tends to be indirect, relating to the development of their children.  Many theoretical frameworks (e.g., psychoanalysis, object relation theory) describe the importance of the mother-child bond and the developmental milestones of the child, but leave out the unique experience and issues of the mother itself (Oberman & Josselson, 1996). Oberman and Josselson (1996) note that there is extensive literature regarding working mothers, including a thorough investigation of the benefits and obstacles that they and their children experience. The focal point of the existing literature on fulltime mothers is typically the benefits derived from the attachment to the child.  In addition, the literature shows how society views the domestic mother as lacking ambition and sacrificing a part of herself (i.e., her "professional" self).

In an attempt to rectify the lack of research surrounding fulltime mothers the current research sought to assist fulltime mothers in communicating their attitudes and feelings, and thereby provided a sounding board on which they were able to fully express themselves.  As noted by Feminist theorist Franzblau (2002), many women feel trapped by the maternal confines of societal roles and expectations placed upon them; the current study explored whether such expectations were experienced by the fulltime mothers who participated in the study.  A comprehension of their value systems, decision-making processes, and the realities of fulltime mothering resulted.  Such realities included the sacrifices that have been made (e.g., career, personal) and the rewards that have been reaped (e.g., love, time).  It is hoped that the collection of these accounts will in itself assist in offering mothers well-deserved gratitude and much-needed validation.

The beneficiaries of this research include potential fulltime mothers who have a firm understanding of their upcoming expectations.  Moreover, current fulltime mothers can thrive from studies of this nature by feeling that their many joys and frustrations will be confirmed, providing them with necessary levels of support and appreciation.  Working mothers, who may lack understanding of their domestic counterparts, due to the sharply contrasted structure of their own lives, can begin to close the chasm of divisive role expectations and gain insight into the experiences and decision-making processes in which domestic mothers partake.  Family members as a whole can further their knowledge and expectations regarding the fulltime mother's workload and feelings related to staying home.  Finally, professionals practicing mental health therapies (e.g., counselors, psychologists, social workers) can utilize the information found in this research when treating families who contain such women.

*Assumptions*

There are two societal assumptions that were relevant to the current study; interestingly, they revolve around the same topic but function from opposing sides of the continuum. The first assumption is the belief that upon childbirth, the mother should stay home to raise her offspring. In this scenario, she relinquishes all of her prior educational and/or employment responsibilities. Extensive literature on this assumption postulates that the primary defense of such a belief is the preservation of the mother-child bond (e.g., Barglow, Vaughn, & Molitor, 1987; Belsky, 1990; Egeland & Heister, 1995).

Egeland and Hiester (1995) completed a study examining the long-term effects maternal employment and infant daycare enrollment had on attachment issues. The results indicated that infants who were deemed secure at 12-months-old and subsequently placed in daycare environments had negative experiences, and thus lowered levels of security as they got older. On the contrary, insecurely attached 12-month-olds thrived in a daycare environment, and thus their attachment levels elevated with age. This study indicates the non-linear nature daycare enrollment may have on the mother-child bond; there are many facets involved which make it an entwined process.

The second societal assumption involves mothers who return to their jobs and transition into motherhood without sacrificing previous career positions. Killien, Habermann, and Jarrett (2001) examined the qualities of mothers who planned to return to their employment sites post-delivery. Eighty percent of the participants did in fact return to work. The researchers found that the mothers' dedication to their employers, the rigid rules of such establishments, and the monetary benefits (e.g., salaries, benefits) dictated their return.

Interestingly, the new mothers experienced a variety of reactions at the offset of their maternity leave.  Some participants enjoyed being back to the rigorous and challenging situations their workplaces could provide.  However, some mothers felt a sense of loss or exhaustion, and consequently yearned that their return to work could have been deferred or conducted on a part-time basis (Killien, et. al, 2001).

Klerman and Leibowitz (1999) revisited the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, (FMLA).  This legislation went into effect on August 1, 1993 and enabled mothers of newborn infants a combination of three months paid maternity leave, as well as the ability to return to work without corollary.  The majority of the women participants did indeed return to work; as the recidivism rate was 60%, leaving 40% of the women's contingent unaffected by the maternity-leave legislation.  The presence of the FMLA allows mothers to combine their mothering and employment duties as they see fit.  Possible implications of the incorporation of such a law into womanhood include higher rates of working mothers, which in turn will increase overall salary levels for women.

Both of these opposing societal assumptions affected the current research on many different levels.  Primarily, the participants involved in the study had opinions relating to whether they were obliged to be at home or in the workforce, or both.  These beliefs may have dictated their decision to stay at home, and have contributed to attitudes they may have about themselves.  Likewise, relationships with their family members, peers, and the community were influenced by the presence of these two assumptions, and their preference for the one which suited their values and lifestyle accordingly.

*Limitations*

This study was solely designated for women who had chosen to stay at home and raise their children on a full-time basis.  The women selected for this study were married and from middle-class households in which family income was not a struggle.  Four women between the ages of 28-35 were selected to participate.  This ensured that participants were in the process of experiencing similar developmental issues.  The current study consisted of Caucasian women who were selected from Fairfax, Virginia, which is a middle-class suburban region located in the outskirts of Washington D.C.  Such constraints were placed upon women participants so that the contrast between their employment in the workforce and within the home (i.e., fulltime motherhood) would be the focal point.  Future research could examine fulltime mothers from various ethnic and developmental backgrounds, along with differing geographical and marital/familial statuses.  Likewise, future quantitative research enable the results to be generalized to the public at large.

Furthermore, while attempting to uncover objectively the experiences of fulltime mothers, the researcher's effect and/or questioning styles may have revolved around her personalized value structure.  In particular, the researcher embarked upon this study under the premise that the transition from work-to-home was undoubtedly quite demanding; every attempt was made to suppress this supposition, however, in order to obtain full impartiality.

*Definitions of Terms*

*Attachment*: The close, emotional bond between the infant and caregiver.  Many theorists believe that secure attachment in the first year of life provides an important foundation for psychological development later in life (e.g., Belsky, 1988).  The current study sought to uncover perceived mother-child attachment levels, particularly based on the mother's fulltime status.

*Family members:*  Husbands, and biological children.

*Fulltime (e.g., domestic) mother:*  Biological mothers who do not receive waged incomes or salaries for compensation of service-related work conducted on a part-time or full-time basis. Interchangeable terms include fulltime mothers, domestic mothers, and SAHM (i.e., stay-at-home-mothers).

*Middle-class Income*:  "Middle-class" America is defined as household salary brackets which reside between $25,000-$75,000.  However, in Virginia, the median 1996 income of a family containing four members was $53,394 (Mishel, Bernstein, & Schmitt, 1999).  Because of the costly standards of living in the Washington DC/Metropolitan area, the current study considered a range of $50,000-$75,000 to be middle class status.

*Psychological welfare:*  The wide scope of emotional and/or mental states of being that affect all aspects of one's life, and can include, but are not limited to the following conditions: anger, happiness, depression, anxiety, and indifference.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Research

*Introduction*

Chapter two entails a comprehensive review of literature related to many aspects of motherhood, which serves as a prologue to the data that has been collected, analyzed and described in the current dissertation. The breadth of this chapter serves to bring about an awareness of the unlimited relationship dynamics, responsibilities, obstacles, joys, opportunities and influences that are associated with mothers and their corresponding family members. In order to understand the full range of experience of fulltime mothers, it is also essential to examine the realm of their working counterparts, in which this chapter also incorporates.

*Attachment Issues and Daycare Enrollment*

Throughout the past three decades, Belsky (1986, 2001) has opposed the utilization of daycare, and has published extensive research emphasizing the deleterious effects such placements can have on the developing child, with specific implications toward the destruction of the mother-child bond. From the 1980s to the present day there has been a heated "daycare battle" between two rivaling sets of researchers, who either associate with the "pro-daycare" side (Clarke-Stewart, 1989; Scarr, 1984; Scarr, Lande, & McCartney, 1989) or the "con-daycare" side (Belsky, 1988; Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Rutter, 1982); both sides in this controversy emphasize their slant when discussing childcare and maternal employment issues, along with developmental outcomes of children. Proponents for each side of the debate are equally passionate that their data accurately represents the realities contemporary families face, specifically the decision of mothers of infants to return to the workforce, thus relinquishing care to a set of strangers (i.e., daycare employees) versus staying home and raising their offspring.

Proponents of working mothers indicate that not only is maternal employment advantageous for the mother herself, but she need not worry about harmful effects such care has on her children.  Indeed, children enrolled in such programs exhibit positive traits, including more peer involvement from a social perspective, as well as confidence, independence and higher adjustment levels.  Researchers who advocate maternal return to the workforce indicate problems with the Strange Situation assessment (Clarke-Stewart, 1988; Hegland & Rix, 1990), and believe that there are no negative effects of daycare on the developing child.  Other research, however, has shown daycare children to be aggressive and demanding (Santrock, 1997).

Interestingly, the researcher's perspective often dictates how such results are analyzed.  For example, the subjective interpretation of "aggressive" behavior could vary amongst researchers, as some might view such behavior more positively than others (e.g., "assertive"), which could ultimately stem from their convictions of the daycare dilemmas.  In other words, those operating from the belief that mothers should return to the workforce might lean towards evaluating children in daycare centers as exhibiting positive behavior.  Likewise, those in who disagree with daycare placements and who sustain the production of material supporting such beliefs (Hill, 1998) might view the same behaviors negatively.

Proponents of fulltime mothers, on the other hand, cite decreased intellectual functioning as one (of many) harmful effects resulting from daycare enrollment.  Han, Waldfogel, and Brooks-Gunn (2001) completed a study in which they studied the cognitive abilities in infants whose mothers were employed in the first year of their lives.  They found that regardless of work hours (i.e., part-time or full-time), cognitive levels were diminished.  Interestingly, this finding was only true with Caucasian babies; the cognitive abilities of African American infants remained constant, despite maternal employment.

Five articles were selected to represent Belsky's contribution to the existing knowledge base regarding fulltime mothers.  In the first of five articles on the daycare debate, Belsky (1988) identified several trends in the arguments in the late 1980s.  In an extensive literature review, he addresses research that revolves around the importance of the mother-child bond.  Throughout the times, many researchers have placed high regard on such interactions (Ainsworth, Blehar, Walters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1989; Sroufe, 1996), which undoubtedly affect the developing child.  Moreover, such bonds are initiated in the formative stages of development, particularly between the ages of 12-18 months of age.  Thus, this time frame is of critical importance, and much of the focus surrounding mother-child separations revolve around this developmental time period.  As to the duration of time a child is placed in daycare settings, research is cited to the effect that 20 or more weekly hours of nonmaternal daycare is detrimental for the nurturance of attachment levels.

Simultaneously, the literature indicates that daycare-reared infants develop into children who have problems cultivating appropriate social skills (e.g., aggression, noncompliance) with playmates their own age.  However, Belsky (1988) argues that there are many factors to consider when contemplating the potentially perilous effects daycare may have upon the developing child, as there are many factors that affect the decision to place a child in daycare, the varied experiences derived from differing daycares and family conditions that influence attachment outside of daycare itself. The quality of the childcare must be assessed (e.g., center care vs. family daycare) as well as the age of entrance into such daycare programs, with earlier admission considered more detrimental.

Child characteristics (i.e., gender, temperament) also come into play.  Previous studies on gender agree that infant boys have adverse reactions to daycare supervision when compared  to

female babies, and studies indicate that this gender difference becomes apparent in the decision

to return to work, as mothers with baby boys are more likely than mothers with infant girls to

raise them at home. Research on temperament shows that seemingly needy and emotional

infants, those who cry incessantly and display uneasiness during long periods of separation from

the mother, may affect the decision to use daycare services, although babies who do not display

such outward irritability might be equally pained, without expressing it overtly (Belsky, 1988).

Additional factors influencing daycare inclusion include maternal/family characteristics

such as socioeconomic status, job satisfaction and related depression scales, as well as role

satisfaction (e.g., fulltime mother, working mother).  The underlying theme throughout this

article indicates a general dissatisfaction with the state of affairs of daycare centers, and the need

to consider such precarious factors from family, community, and policy-making standpoints

(Belsky, 1988).

Belsky (1990) offers a retrospective analysis of the literature on daycare on the entire

decade of the 1980s.  This article, the second in a sequence of five, is twofold; the first portion

includes an extensive literature of the daycare debate, followed by a "wave of research"

metaphor, utilized to illustrate different research trends.  The literature review is similar to that of

the first article, as it offers thorough examinations of factors relating to infant daycare

enrollment.  Such factors include the detriments of parent child relations and the "influence" of

parent-child relations on child development.

Reciprocity can describe the nature of the determinants involved with parent-child

relations.  Parents have unique dispositions and characteristics that compose their personality

structures; however, children shape such preexisting qualities with their own unique

temperaments.  Likewise, children react to parental attitudes and behaviors, and thus a cyclical

pattern emerges between parent and child.  Each unique personality influences the other, and creates a give-and-take dynamic that evolves over the course of the years.  Children's characteristics that bring out negative qualities in mothers (e.g., controlling punishments) include disobedience and high levels of activity.  However, reactions to such negativity vary with unique parental characteristics, and research indicates that mature mothers with strong egos are able to implement empathic and appropriate parental approaches, especially if they themselves had been parented in similar fashions (Belsky, 1990).

Further determinants of parent-child relations include marital relationships and social network support.  It is significant to mention that such support systems can sustain parents through difficult childrearing expeditions.  Indisputably, parents rely on each other through arduous times, as they are simultaneously experiencing the trials and tribulations of parenthood, and thus have equal investments and similar frustrations.  A social element can offer the periodic release that can cushion the stressors related to the parenting process (Belsky, 1990).

Further, Belsky (1990) discusses parental influences on child development.  In particular, he reiterates the importance of emotional support and responsiveness (i.e., attachment security), as he had in his earlier article (Belsky, 1988).  In that article, he restated Bowlby's theory of attachment, describing the "Strange Situation," in which implications are again emphasized toward the facilitation of the mother-child bond, thus eradicating the insecurely-attached infant phenomenon.

Important complements to the attachment theories emphasized throughout Belsky's work thus far are social learning and relationship components.  The former includes a theoretical premise that shapes childhood behaviors through a system of rewards and punishments, which then predict behavioral components such as cooperation and aggression.  The latter is connected

to the social learning theory in that it emphasizes the importance of highly refined interpersonal

skills, which are learned and developed through mother-child relationships, and can then be

practiced throughout the preschool years and beyond with peer relationships (Belsky, 1990).

The second half of Belsky's (1990) "decade in review" consists of an organization of the

research relating to nonmaternal care, which he categorizes into "waves" which overlap one

another, rather than following a timely progression.  Such an overview is crucial in depicting

past patterns, which can provide a general understanding of people's values, as well as

accounting for present and future behavioral and research norms.  The first wave introduces the

daycare phenomenon in the 1970s by describing the initial daycare centers, typically consisting

of high-quality, university-based daycare centers, which inquiring researchers described without

alarm or trepidation.  During wave two, researchers began to compare their research results

against others to determine certain daycare features, which were becoming required necessities

and yielding more positively oriented children (e.g., emotionally secure, cooperative,

intellectually capable).  These features included the appropriateness of teacher-student ratios,

education and training of daycare providers, and specific interactions and techniques between

providers and children.

Wave three began to include more specifications, as the literature was evolving and more

evidence about daycare effects was emerging.  At this time, Belsky (1990) concluded that the

first year of life was coming to be understood as a crucial time period, and that 20 weekly hours

or more of daycare was deemed detrimental on the infant development, in that it caused

disobedience and aggression in preschool aged children.  Wave four began incorporating the

different family contexts (family life, work, childcare) and how each realm interfaced and

influenced the developmental processes; wave five, on the other hand brought about the

possibility that the daycare providers themselves influence the evolving developmental advancements that their values and direction that will have lasting effects on emerging childhood characteristics, even exceeding parental jurisdictions.

The third article in Belsky's series was a quantitative study conducted by Belsky and Eggebeen (1991), in which the socioemotional functioning (i.e., compliance, inhibition, attachment security, sociability, and behavior problems) was examined in association with maternal employment.  Five-hundred and sixty-five children, between the ages of 4-6, from the 1986 child assessment of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth [NLSY] were examined. Three groups of children were examined across a span of three years. The first of these had mothers who were employed for 30 or more hours a week.  The second group's mothers did not work full-time throughout their child's first year of life, but began employment upon their child's second birthday, which continued throughout the child's third year.  The third group sampled consisted of mothers who did not work, or worked less than ten hours weekly, for the length of the three year time frame.

Belsky and Eggebeen (1991) showed that the results of this study revealed that children whose mothers were employed full time, beginning in either the first or second year of their child's life and continuing throughout the third year, scored lower on a composite measure of adjustment (i.e., behavior problems total + insecurity/compliance).  This was in stark contrast to the group of children whose mothers were not employed throughout their first three years.

The fourth article in review examined first-born sons who were two-years of age.  The children targeted for this study came from families whose parents were having difficulties controlling their sons' behaviors.  Additionally, these families utilized at least 20 hours of nonmaternal daycare throughout the first year of their children's lives.  Belsky, Woodworth, and

Crnic (1996) hypothesized that the combination of these two elements, along with the normative stressors that are accompanied with parenting a toddler such as their willfulness, independence and autonomy, emerge and the children were often labeled "difficult," thus generating problems with the family unit.

The results of this study indicate that when parents were operating from higher pools of resources, evidenced by extensive amounts of social support, economic resources, and high-leveled psychological functioning, the family system appeared to operate smoothly (e.g., devoid of overabundant stress levels).  However, families who did not have such resources, and who utilized 20 hours or more of daycare per week, experienced problems with their sons during toddlerhood (Belsky, et. al, 1996).

The last article is based on a lecture, and offers another reflective review of the daycare debates.  In it, Belsky (2001) discusses the issues that have emerged throughout the past three decades, including the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care (i.e., NICHD-SECC).  In this study, 1,300 children and their families were examined throughout the first three years of life, both at home and in daycare centers, to assess cognitive and socio-emotional development levels.  The article introduces readers to the daycare dilemmas, by yet again reporting the importance of the mother-child bond, and how such constraints in the development of this bond can result in insecure or avoidant attachment levels in the developing child.  Belsky (2001) also depicts the state of daycare affairs in this country, indicating that 55% of mothers of infants with one-year old infants are employed, similar to countries abroad, as the UK has similar statistics (i.e., 53%).

Belsky (2001) restates the beliefs he has maintained throughout the years, and provides research to endorse his enduring claims.  He discusses the controversy and the critics who have

attacked his position, insisting that there findings were invalid based on evaluation methods, including the "Strange Situation" approach and how current research has accommodated such acclaims (e.g., "natural" observations).  He maintains his stace regarding his belief in attachment theory, the crucial timing of entry into daycare (i.e., the detriments of enrollment within the first year of life), and the need for quality daycare.  Belsky (2001) argues that future research should concentrate on the interaction between quality and quantity of daycare, and that more emphasis should be placed on family matters which affect the child's overall well-being and adjustment levels to daycare.  Additionally, he emphasizes the fact that there is enough evidence in existence for policy-makers to modify the current state of affairs in favor of expanding paid, parental leave in order to provide parents with the necessary freedom to choose to enroll children, or, preferably, not to enroll, in daycare environments.

Throughout his work, Belsky (2001) provides extensive literature to back up his ideals, and extends the work conducted by earlier research (Bowlby, 1969, 1973) to justify his claims. Additionally, he provides "reviews" of the literature, indicating specific patterns that have come about throughout the decades; such trend analysis provides insight and knowledge into current issues, based on historical movements, and which also affect future directions.

Belsky's (2001) passion for improving childhood experiences, imagining mothers remaining by their children's sides throughout their formative years, is admirable, if unrelenting. Belsky (2001) provided extensive literature to support his notion of the need for fulltime mothers, although he would have increased his credibility by providing more objectivity and understanding that most social issues entail two sides and that readers should be allowed  to make their own conclusions.  While his fervent endeavors are commendable, it would have been stimulating to see him acknowledge mothers who valued the world of the working.  Future

studies should acknowledge both forms of childcare to be valid decisions, and the impassioned debates, with accompanying disdain for the "other side", will hopefully diminish.

*Employment*

In order to thoroughly examine issues related to mothers who stay at home, it is essential to investigate mothers employed in the workforce.  Eggebeen and Hawkins (1990) explored the underlying reasons why a woman's status has transitioned from domestic mother to employee over the past several decades.  The Public Use Microdata Samples of the U.S. Census population were utilized, focusing on the time period between 1960 and 1980, with a concentration on married women of Caucasian descent.  Many reasons for the increased participation of women in the formal economy are well known including the women's movement, amplified pay rates for female employees, a need for dual-incomes, as well as a greater attainment of degrees in higher education.  The most common reason cited by the majority of people (e.g., scholars, the general public) for the increase in women's employment rates is financial necessity (e.g., Hock, Gnezda, & McBride, 1984; Hochschild, 1989).

Eggebeen and Hawkins (1990) provide compelling evidence to prove otherwise.  They examined emerged patterns over the course of three decades, and they broke down the female participants into two groups based on spousal income: "adequate income," which was determined by doubling the official poverty level and "low income," which was defined by income which fell two times below the official poverty level.  Their statistics show that women's households in the 1960's contained 9% of adequate income levels and 18% of lower income levels; by 1970 adequate income levels increased to 21%, while low income levels slightly dropped to 16%.  Finally, by 1980, the adequate income households soared to 31%, and low income households rose faintly to 20%.  Using U.S. Bureau of the Census data, Mishel, et al.

(1999) found that the annual growth of salaries within middle-class families continued to grow, but at very slow rates (e.g., 2.6% between 1967-1973; .6% between 1973-1979; .4% between 1979-1989; and .1% between 1989-1997).

The statistical analysis that Eggebeen and Hawkins (1990) displayed indicates a relatively consistent lower-income rate throughout the three decades, while the adequate incomes continued to escalate during this time period.  In 1980, Caucasian men were more equipped than they had been two decades earlier to provide financially for their family members.  Interestingly, in a 1980 survey, 90% of female participants indicated that their participation in employed positions was due to financial constraints within family households.  Although increases in cost of living may play a factor, the authors surmise that such a declaration results in partaking in a higher standard of living (e.g., "keeping up with the Jones's), or perceived need, rather than actual financial need.  An increase in standards of living can be evidenced throughout the decades.  During the 1950's, for instance, many households lacked indulgences in "luxury" appliances (e.g., gas or electric cooking), by the mid-1970's, such devices were customary.

In order to keep up with such opulence, Eggebeen and Hawkins (1990) describe a shift in societal values between 1960 and 1980.  For example, marriages were delayed to accommodate the pursuit of women's career goals, which enabled contributions toward the increased standard of living.  Delays in marriage resulted in premarital sexual relations and delayed childbearing, which consequently facilitated a reduction of number of household children.  Such societal shifts can be seen in a Gallup Poll conducted in 1980 which queried women concerning what ideal lifestyles would consist of.  In 1980, 33% responded such a life would include marriage, children, and a career; in 1982, 40% of the female respondents answered with the same sentiment.

Eggebeen and Hawkins (1990) believed that our society desires material possessions, and that even when these possessions are obtained, such yearnings continue.  Families can choose to relinquish the pursuit of personal belongings by resorting to single-earning households, but such a trend is not in the foreseeable future, due to a collective "hunger" for more belongings.  Additionally, families with dual-income earners are able to relieve financial pressures, and thus have more room for unexpected life events (e.g., lay-offs) and can increase their options (e.g., start a business, further an education).  But the authors also believe that the consequences of increased workloads include lack of availability for family involvement and personal fulfillment (e.g., leisurely activities), which can affect overall psychological well-being.

*Working from Home*

Leonard (2001) brings the concept of "homeworking" to the forefront.  Although many professional, "white-collar" male employees have been transitioned from office locale to their home environments, this populace is not included under the realm of the homeworking construct.  Rather, women, typically in lower-status positions, who bear the brunt of intertwining employment with their own personalized housework and childcare demands are those who fall into this category (e.g., housekeepers, seamstresses).  Women typically enter such occupations with the intent of concurrently raising their children and bringing home a salaried income, with the faulty assumption that such obligations will easily complement each other.

The unfortunate reality involves harsh work hours from unsympathetic employers who hold high expectations.  Likewise, the spouses of homeworking mothers are equally insensitive to their wives' dual roles.  Such spouses oftentimes overlook their wives' employment responsibilities, demanding that household chores be their overriding priority.  In fact, many husbands mirror society's view of homeworkers, and believe that women in such roles are

partaking in a hobby (e.g., dressmaking) throughout the day, rather than undertaking a significant career service.  Although at present, women claim their primary reason for participation in such work revolves around adequate childcare for their offspring, Leonard (2001) projects future trends in which women are equally responsible for eldercare (e.g., parents, relatives).

Leonard (2001) also discusses women and men employed informally, workers who are paid "under the table," free of taxation and legislative control.  Most of this work suffers profoundly from a gender gap in which women are "home-based" workers (e.g., maids), whereas men are able to utilize a specific skill, such as construction work.  It shall be intriguing to investigate if this phenomenon prevails within the current study.

Likewise, according to Leonard (2001), women who are employed informally are more apt to conduct their work on a part-time basis, while men work fulltime shifts.  Part-time employment frees up hours that women can then dedicate to their household and childcare "jobs."  Their informal positions lack recognition, particularly since they do not contrast from the domestic duties performed at home; when women go into other peoples' homes to clean or care, they are merely seen as extending and perfecting what comes naturally to them within their own households.  This ideal perpetuates the devaluation  that domestic women encounter.

*Appalachian Informal Workers*

McInnis-Dittrich (1995) further explores the concepts of female informal workers, with a particular concentration on Appalachian women.  Appalachian women are forced to participate in legal and illegal work, since conventional positions are preserved for the men in the community.  Much of the legal work revolves around childcare and household duties as well, and most of the women within this impoverished community are fulltime mothers who have to take care of their children, while scraping up money intermittently.  Informal jobs that provide them

with sporadic monetary income, while allowing them to stay at home and monitor their own children's needs, include the following: participation in monthly yardsales, prostitution, the sale of illegal drugs, and babysitting.  The author appropriately terms Appalachian females as "women of the shadows" for the oppressive, dangerous and vulnerable destitution into which they have been placed.

*Work Obstacles*

Women's perceived career obstacles correlate with their ultimate decision to work or stay home after the birth of their child.  Luzzo and McWhirter (2001) conducted a study which addressed these issues and concluded that women did, in actuality, experience more career impediments.  The women in this study believed such difficulties begin in the hiring process, and continue if employment follows, with victimization occurring through means of offensive taunts, and sexual advances.

*Historical Work Obstacles*

A qualitative, historical overview of fulltime Norwegian mothers was conducted by Gronbech (2000).  The lives of the maternal participants were filled with laborious work, strife, and many financial obstacles.  The women who participated in the study are no strangers to the concept of war; most of them were born around the time of World War I, and endured angst-ridden childhoods, both beginning work and terminating educational pursuits at tender ages.  Yet the women remember growing up and craving the attainment of marriage and motherhood statuses.

Fulltime motherhood consisted of raising a handful of children, frail parents and in-laws, while the husbands were gone on fishing escapades for months at a time.  All of the interviewed mothers had been married, yet most of their parenting was comparable to the single-parent's

experience, as long paternal absenteeism resulted in the mothers' general caring for the children, nursing rampant illnesses (e.g., Tuberculosis) as well as educating, feeding and clothing their offspring (Gronbech, 2000).

Tending to household duties entailed farm and animal (e.g., sheep, cows) management, as well as "current" chores such as cooking and cleaning.  In essence, what would be termed a farmer in modern day terminology, was referred to as the typical duties of a housewife.  Buying necessities, such as clothing and food, was an effort in itself.  In comparison to today's standards of living, the women faced much more deprivation.  Because of this, mothers practiced scrimping, saving and recycling goods (e.g., clothing, water), which could be put to future use (Gronbech, 2000).

Today, the elder Norwegian women under study, whose children have grown, married and left home, live lavish lifestyles in comparison to their younger years.  Their husbands, all of whom have passed away, have left pensions and large estates for them to retire.  Yet, their old habits remain constant  they still conserve as much as possible, modestly heating their homes or buying limited commodities.  Reflecting upon their lives, these women are grateful at all the blessings and good fortune that had come their way.  Nevertheless, Gronbech (2000) reports such women as living in lonesome isolation, yet too proud to reach out and ask for assistance or companionship.  They collectively feel as though the hard work they had put forth throughout the years has been overlooked and under-appreciated, particularly by their daughters, who are reportedly economically frivolous and forgetful of their heritage.

When examining motherhood issues through the Norwegian perspective, it is also essential to grasp the cultural issues modern women within the United States currently face. Contemporary matters within the family unit include understanding and incorporating anger into

postpartum strain, as opposed to focusing solely upon depression (Graham, Lobel, & Stein

DeLuca, 2002) and the fear some women have of upward mobility within the career realm, as

they worry that extended concentration at work will take away from family interactions

(Weintrob, 2001).  Such women excel at obtaining ambitious career routes (e.g., medical

doctors), but interestingly they may idle toward the "lower" end of such high-powered careers

(e.g., pediatricians vs. surgeons).

<center>*Differences Between Fulltime and Employed Mothers*</center>

Caruso (1996) discusses the literature written on the fulltime –versus- employment

dilemma mothers face.  The research on this subject matter, based on mother child attachment

viewpoints expressed in earlier decades, has produced diverse and inconsistent results

(Burchinal, Bryan, Lee, & Ramey, 1992; Caruso, 1989, Egeland & Heister, 1995).  Such a

discrepancy has led to studies that incorporate external dynamics that may affect such an

ambiguous phenomenon, including childrearing practices, and routines among families with both

employed and fulltime mothers, as well as positive and negative attributes within various daycare

facilities.

For the current study, Caruso (1996) sought to address two phenomena.  The first

involved the interactions between mothers and infants, and how such configurations are different

for mothers who stay at home and for those employed outside of the home.  The second question

revolved around mothers who were indeed employed, and how their career choices may have

affected differential mothering approaches.  Fifty four married mothers, along with their year-old

children were assessed on The Nursing Child Assessment Teaching Scale, which addresses

maternal responses toward children based on six factors.  These factors included the following:

the caregiver's response to infant cues and distress, the caregiver's socio-emotional growth

fostering and cognitive growth fostering, the infant's clarity of cues, and the infants responsiveness to the caregiver.

The only difference found between fulltime mothers and working mothers was in the sensitivity mothers expressed toward infant cues. In particular, the working mothers of higher-level positions (e.g., managerial, professional) were more interactive and sensitive. This finding indicates not only that there are some differences with regard to mother-child interaction levels between fulltime and working mothers, but that the high status positions produce prestige and recognition, which in turn positively correlates to valuable mother-child relations (Caruso, 1996).

*Developmental Issues*

As human beings, we are constantly in the process of developing, growing and learning about ourselves. As such, the current dissertation research seeks to unravel the mysteries behind fulltime mothers, all of whom are in distinct stages of development and are interacting with family members (e.g., children and spouses) who, themselves, are proceeding through their own developmental phases. Since questions circulating around child and adult-developmental concerns will arise, (e.g., "What benefits do your children have because you stay at home instead of working outside of the home?" "How do you help your children with their homework?") It would be necessary, therefore, to acknowledge literature surrounding pertinent developmental issues.

Santrock (1997) discusses the career development paths many women take in early adulthood. The internal struggle revolving around pursuit of career versus pursuit of family is pervasive, and women structure this decision in many ways. One path women may choose is to pursue a job temporarily during high school or college before becoming married and having

children.  As the children grow and begin to start lives of their own, the mothers may then reestablish their educational or career paths once again.

Other directions in which women can turn revolve around the nurturance of their careers. Santrock (1997) describes four courses women who maintain their careers may take.  He terms the first course as "The Regular" which is categorized by women who continue to work at their job sites with little or no disruptions, regardless of their motherhood status.  "The Interrupted Career" describes women who spend a few years out of work usually to care for their children. "The Second Career" is one pursued by a woman who enters the job force as her children age. The final stage, "The Modified Second Career" involves women who go back to work, possibly part time, when their children became autonomous, allowing them to become more invested (e.g., transitioned from part time work to full time hours) when the children leave home for good.

In contrast, there has not been an extensive amount of research indicating who the fulltime mother is.  Whereas fulltime mothering is typically believed to be conducted by less-educated mothers who leave jobs readily upon giving birth due to lack of career-commitment, there has been historical evidence (Simmons, 1970) indicating that educated, high-status women are engaging in domestic lifestyles, for the perceived well-being of the child (e.g., upholding the mother-child bond, etc).

*Liability*

Mother blame, which results in residual feelings of guilt, is common for mothers who have enrolled their children in daycare programs.  The intricacies of such emotions involve parents longing to be with their children, or who imagine that their children cannot possibly function without them.  Additional dynamics include worrying about the quality of care their children are receiving in the immediate future, as well as enduring effects daycare may have on

their children.  According to Santrock (1997), mothers typically react by demonstrating one of the following behaviors: they either admit possible consequences involved with daycare enrollment and work with such implications, or they deny such possibilities exist, and spend their time producing excuses as to why they have enrolled their children in daycare.

Trends that are furthering our existing knowledge base include the involvement of fathers into the caregiving process (Zimmerman, 2000).  Such movement will help reverse the devastating and residual feelings of guilt and anxiety placed upon the mother; with increased levels of father involvement and "father blame" we may see the direction of childcare moving into different directions, including more liberal and supportive parental-leave laws.  Although Feminist proponents have been campaigning for such a movement throughout the years, it will be interesting to note an increased velocity of such actions once fathers are intertwined into childcare liabilities.

Nichols and Schwartz (1995) point out that therapists operating from a Feminist perspective can attempt to resolve such an occurrence by including the father as much as possible.  While working therapeutically with families, an important consideration to be mindful of is the parallel process associated with blame.  Whereas the counselor may be attempting to extinguish the blame placed on the mother, it is important not to blame the uninvolved father. Particularly, knowledge of appropriate semantics is in order; and indicating that a husband has "chauvinistic" tendencies, or referring to a woman as being "just" a housewife can be detrimental and counter-therapeutic (Hanna & Brown, 1999).

*Conceptualization of Motherhood*

Ex and Janssens (2000) conducted a study with Dutch adolescents and young adults to understand how they conceptualize motherhood in general, based on the feelings they have

toward their own mothers in conjunction with fictional mothering roles.  Parallel to other industrialized countries, Holland has experienced tremendous labor shifts among its' female residents over the past three decades in which a large number of women have left their nurturing roles behind and have entered the workforce at staggering rates.

The current study, therefore, sought to uncover how such a transient timeframe could affect the perceptions of the young Dutch participants.  Results indicated that the females conceptualized motherhood to encompass the best of both worlds. Mothers were defined as being both responsive and sensitive to their families, while assertively achieving their career goals. This comprehensive outlook was particularly prevalent in the adult age-group who had higher education levels, whereas the pre-adolescent girls with lesser educational backgrounds tended to conceive of a mothering role to be less career oriented.  Likewise, the latter group projected a version of an ideal mother to encompass such traditional roles, in contrast to the older, educated group.  Consequently, viewpoints of such ideologies were a combination of their idealizations combined with their own mother's career and familial statuses  (Ex & Janssens, 2000).

*Attitudes Toward Employment and Caregiving*

*Attitudes Toward Paid Work*

In order to fully grasp the fulltime mother's experience, attitudes and value norms must be examined.  Youngblut (1995) emphasized the important link between a mother's employment attitude and her actual employment status (e.g., employed; fulltime), and how an inconsistency between such attitudes and statuses can adversely affect maternal mental health functioning (e.g., depression, anxiety), as well as influence cognitive and behavioral problems within their children.  Mothers with premature babies oftentimes forego their belief systems to accommodate the overriding emotions that accompany caring for a preterm baby.  For example, as guilt and

trepidation are commonly expressed in mothers with premature babies, career-oriented women may feel responsible to stay at home to compensate for such feelings, or because they underestimate a childcare facility's ability to handle their infant's special requirements. On the other hand, women whose desire to stay at home may be severed due to the increased financial demands associated with premature infants, as well as the guarantee of complete medical and insurance coverage by her employer.

The current study revolves around consistency levels between employment attitudes and statuses among women with full-term and premature infants over a 15-month period (e.g., 3-18 months of age). Two theoretical frameworks were utilized; the first of which, titled *reasoned actions* believes that attitudes regarding specific values (e.g., fulltime, or working values) affect corresponding behavioral statuses. The second framework operates from a *cognitive dissonance* perspective, and professes that behaviors are the crucial mechanism involved in molding attitudinal values. An example of the latter is a working mother who once revered the concept of staying at home and raising her children but is forced into employment due to financial constraints. Unable to live with such guilt and inadequacies, she adopts an alternative viewpoint and accepts a working mother's lifestyle (Youngblut, 1995).

For the purposes of this study, Youngblut (1995) chose to test both theories (i.e., reasoned actions and cognitive dissonance), to observe which is applicable to the current situation. Additionally, both theories were examined with the assumption that they might interact and influence each other in a cyclical manner, thereby producing employment attitude and status consistency. Outside factors, which shape the consistency process included spousal and societal beliefs, the health and well-being of the child, as well as current financial stability within the family unit. The results indicate that maternal attitudes of both fullterm and preterm

infants remained steady throughout the 15-month period; likewise, attitude-behavioral consistency was moderately steady, as two-thirds of the women, with both fullterm and preterm babies, maintained similar attitudes and behaviors throughout the time period.

Attitude changes, which stemmed from changes in participants' behaviors represented the greatest modifications (i.e., 43.4% in 3-9 months; 50.9% in 9-18 months), supporting the cognitive dissonance theory.  This was followed by the behavioral changes that were made due to maternal attitudes (i.e., reasoned action theory), which was evidenced in 37.7% of the mothers with 3-9 month old babies, and 30.9% of mothers with 9-18 aged infants.  Simultaneous changes in behavioral and attitudinal behaviors were found amongst 18.9% of the mothers with 3-9 month old babies, along with 18.2% of the 9-18 month olds.  The only differential patterns found between mothers with preterm and fullterm babies consisted of childcare availability, with consistently-employed mothers believing care was more accessible than mothers within the other groups.  All of the participants believed that their financial positions presupposed their eventual employment endeavors (Youngblut, 1995).

*Attitudes throughout the Decades*

Simon and Landis (1989) accessed polls related to such gendered expectations, and traced patterns that have emerged over the decades.  Beginning in 1938 and continuing through 1972, an increase in approval rates for maternal employment was evident.  Such approval trends continued to rise throughout the next decade, as the prevalence of working women became the standard, and the demand for dual-incomes became higher.

Another trend was in the attitude toward the number of children per family needed to maintain the status quo.  Starting in the 1970's and continuing over the next two decades, the number of children desired in each family was split in half, falling from four children to two.

The authors surmise that such a drastic decline could have resulted in part from the changing responsibility of the mother from a domestic role to a working role (Simon & Landis, 1989).

Another interesting finding that Simon and Landis (1989) concluded from such polls was the attitude toward gender roles, which remained stagnant instead of shifting to meet the demands of the new decades. Over time, the attitudes were unchanged regarding women's expectation to follow their husbands to various site locations when transferring jobs. Such sacrifice would not be reciprocated if the wife found an attractive position elsewhere; when it is the woman who has been relocated, she is expected to relinquish such an offer in order to avoid uprooting her husband's career. The implications that can be drawn from this study can certainly parallel expectations within the family dynamics.

Glass (1992) related the diversity between husbands and wives and the demographical and attitudinal changes that took place between the years of 1972-1986. The findings throughout the decades indicate that women who stay at home in a domestic capacity compared to women who are employed in the workforce operate from differing foundations, with separate values and belief systems. Despite the common knowledge of this theoretical statement, there has been little empirical evidence to support such a universal notion. The possibility of this discrepancy can be understood from the life cycle most women maintained in previous decades; most of them experienced periods of employment and unemployment over the course of their married lives depending on their childrearing statuses. Therefore, if the attitudinal differences between unemployed and employed women were studied at one point in time, the women would reportedly have very similar values, but their roles would continually evolve and change (i.e., mother to worker, and vice versa).

Based on the trends of past decades, with the rampant levels of divorce throughout the 1970s and the diminishment of the gender gap wage in the 1980s, the Glass' research seeks to understand if likening attitudes have amplified the gulf between domestic wives and their working counterparts.  Data was derived from the General Social Surveys (GSS) to obtain differences between the beliefs between the two groups of women in regard to their political, sexual control, and household viewpoints in the years 1972 and 1986 (Glass, 1992).

Glass, (1992) indeed did find that the attitudinal differences among employed and unemployed wives have widened in certain areas.  Specifically, the women interviewed in 1986 held opposing views in regard to the effects of mothers' employment on children and the appropriate roles men and women should uphold in their marriages.  An even more noticeable difference was in the beliefs women had toward sexual issues such as abortion, although political differences did not emerge in the current data.  Therefore, it can be surmised that the two groups of women held opposing beliefs in regard to the ways in which their inward, private lives should be conducted, although their public and political orientations were relatively similar.

The main differences found among full-time employees and housewives in 1986 were full-time employees were younger, their levels of education were more advanced, leading invariably to increased incomes, and they had fewer children.  There was no distinction in these same variable in 1972, as the women were similar to each other across the board.  Possible explanations to explain the differences in 1986 include fulltime educational and employment opportunities that may not have been attractive to mothers who were responsible for a household of children.  Likewise, women who were employed in high status careers may not have felt a desire to produce as many offspring (Glass, 1992).

The implications from this study include the socialization, values and beliefs that the children in both groups (i.e., employed and domestic mothers) will attain.  Specifically, will the future educational and employment opportunities between traditional and contemporary households yield children with opposing life directions? An additional concern involves policy-making procedures.  Specifically, Glass (1992) expressed concern with regard to the direction maternal laws are taking.  There is a need for women with children to have specific accommodations, particularly increased, paid leaves of absence, and more affordable childcare.  However, with such diverse attitudes among women, the laws will likely mirror such ambiguity, and there might be a lapse in time before such implementations are enforced.

*Housework and Caregiving*

Shelton (1990) found that women who were employed conducted most of the housework and childcare duties themselves, with no additional support from their husbands.  Although the participation of husbands in general has increased over the decades (Booth & Amato, 1994; Zimmerman, 2000), the employment status of wives is not a contributing factor in domestic assistance.  Additional studies prevalent in the literature today contain evidence about the division of labor, and how working women do not receive household support from their husbands, despite their employed statuses (Pina & Bengston, 1993).

Baxter and Western (1998) concur that women carry the majority of the housework responsibilities, regardless of equal employment commitments.  Not surprisingly, men were quite satisfied with conditions in which they were required to contribute minimally to domestic chores.  But women also reported gratification with such household inequities.  The authors found that it was not a matter of equally proportionate work between spouses; instead wives were satisfied with any kind of involvement from their husbands.  Rather than feel injustice at the discrepancies

between household labors, they felt fortunate that their spouses would even contribute at all, and the perceived alternative to their husbands meager attempts was naught.

*Supermoms*

Women who assume multiple roles (e.g., mother, wife, employer) as well as the multiple responsibilities within each role (e.g., acting as a chauffer and caregiver in the mothering role), were referred to by Hochschild (1989) as "supermoms."  The amount of sacrifice each supermom made in order to complete each of her duties was significant, evidenced not only by the number of duties each supermom held, but also by the amount of time spent at each (e.g., spending long hours at night with children after spending long hours in the office).  Not surprising, most women characterized themselves as being "organized and competent" in addition to experiencing their roles uniquely (e.g., accomplished, or failed).

Similarly, DeMeis and Perkins (1996) define "supermoms" as fulltime or employed mothers who spread themselves thin by engaging in a wide range of activities.  Both sets of mothers participate in equally broad caretaking and household duties, whereas those who stay at home contribute more hours to each domestic task.  Previous research  (Anderson & Leslie, 1991) had demonstrated employed mothers' tendency to minimize the amount of time needed to spend on childcare and household work, while maximizing the positive benefits (e.g., socialization) yielded from placing their children in daycare facilities.

Because mothers tended to define the importance of tasks based on those that they participated in (e.g., fulltime mothers believed caregiving to be more important), DeMeis and Perkins (1996) sought to unravel such subjective meaning placed upon mother's objective realities.  Specifically, general perceptual and behavioral differences between fulltime and employed mothers were examined, along with a causal relationship between the two (i.e.,

specific perceptions, which lead to corresponding behaviors).  The two groups of mothers held similar beliefs regarding the importance placed upon their rigorous responsibilities although the responsibilities themselves were not the same.  For example, fulltime mothers placed high significance upon engaging in recreational activities (e.g., watching television, playing sports) with their children, whereas working mothers did not regard such shared time as particularly meaningful.

Such diverging opinions may be caused and/or reinforced by the differing social groups with which each set of mothers interact. Fulltime mothers define norms through other domestic mothers (as do working mothers), and consequently pick up shared behaviors and activities. Such norms serve to reinforce their behavioral and perceptual values.  Fulltime mothers feel that shared recreation should not be sacrificed, and therefore recreational time with children strengthens the importance of their work.  Working mothers, on the other hand, undermine such activities, which in turn, supports their career foci.  With regard to household responsibilities (e.g., cooking, cleaning), both types of mothers engaged in equally broad chores, and therefore stressed their importance (DeMeis & Perkins, 1996).

*Health Issues And Motherhood*

Health issues factor into the decisions women make regarding their return to work or staying at home with their children.  In this section, the concept of "health" can be described as both physical and emotional wellbeing.  Gjerdingen, Froberg, and Kochevar (1991) studied the mental and physical health of novice mothers reestablishing their employment statuses.  Upon their return from the birthing hiatus, the women regularly utilized a significant amount of their sick days, and continued this pattern until the six months postpartum mark.  There are many possibilities to explain such a phenomenon, including both the collective and unique reactions

women have from mothering; maladies exist from a psychological, physical, mental, situational, and social perspective. It is important for employers to be cognizant of such sick patterns, which in turn, may even prompt further ailments.

Additional results indicated that women having had high levels of depression during pregnancy were those that delayed their return to work. Comparatively, the women who did feel healthy during their pregnancies felt able to return to work, which subsequently led to the onset of depressive symptoms (Gjerdingen, et. al, 1991).

In research conducted by Lennon and Rosenfield (1992), the amount of control mothers had in their jobs predicted their mental health. Specifically, women who were independent within their job environments fared better than those who had smaller amounts of autonomy (inclusive in this category is the role of the housewife). Thus, having children is not the source of poor mental functioning, but it exacerbates problems if mothers have little work command. The authors assert that problems associated with one element of a person's life (e.g., work) can balance inadequacies or strengths in other life arenas (e.g., family).

Similarly, Barnett and Marshall (1992) were intrigued with this subject matter, and sought to investigate the psychological risks employment had on mothers. In their study, they examined mothers who were employed either as Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN's), or Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW's) and reported the mental health of such subjects. The results indicate that the mothers who had positive work experiences translated that positivity into their parenting roles and had improved interactions with their children.

However, the reverse was not true, in that positive parenting roles did not affect their work relationships. Interestingly, negativity was not correlated with either parenting roles or work roles; the bad experiences mothers endured in one realm did not transfer into the other.

Stated differently, one negative role did not account for ill feelings in the other areas, although if the mothers were experiencing difficulties in both of their roles, their mental health would suffer (Barnett & Marshall, 1992).

*Mental Health And Gender*

Glass and Fujimoto (1994) report on the literature which implies a connection between depression and employment status.  Specifically, they found that both men and women who are employed receive outside stimulation, increased levels of self worth, and therefore, enhanced self-images.  However, in response to their wives' employment, husbands tend to become depressed, oftentimes serving a catalyst for their wives' depression.  Two theories emerged to explain why such depressive symptoms appear with corresponding employment levels.  One theory, equity, or fair exchange, explains why men feel guilty at the hard work and long hours their wives contribute to the maintenance of their marriage (i.e., employed and domestic work). Even though men and women work equivalent hours in their employed positions, men do not feel compelled to help out with the housework, thus resulting in levels of shame and guilt.

The second theory, role theory (i.e., multiple role identities; role conflict), more adequately describes the etiology of depression among wives.  This theory suggests that individuals who experience several roles, as well as the stress that comes with each role, can feel the alleviation of such stressors when in the midst of accompanying roles.  For example, women derive stress from their roles as worker, mother, and wife.  While performing her employed duties, however, she is temporarily relieved of the pressures that supplement her role as wife and mother, thus enabling the existence of her multiple roles.  However, as the responsibilities become more overwhelming in each role, and the stress of managing time and energy become the primary focus, a sense of overburden and exhaustion set in (Glass & Fujimoto, 1994).

Additionally, the existence of role alleviation can only exist in each role if people are experiencing positive reinforcement, praise and recognition.  When looking historically at the roles women encompass, their employment has usually evoked many negative experiences, such as sexual harassment, lack of recognition for their work, scrutiny, and difficulties with childcare dilemmas.  On the other hand, there have been reportedly many subjective rewards for their mothering roles, such as the ability to nurture and provide home-cooked meals, along with the independence they incur by setting their own standards.  At the same time, the mothering role lacks appreciation, admiration and prestige for such hard work, which in itself is stressful.  Additionally, the tasks involved with mothering are enduring, and disseminate over the years, in contrast to concrete goals and job duties that are required on the site (Glass & Fujimoto, 1994).

Based on the above, Glass and Fujimoto (1994) ingaged in an investigation to explore such intriguing interplays regarding employment levels, depression, and the unique experiences they bring to the opposite sex.  The National Survey of Families and Households was utilized to assist in the quest to understand the reactions of gendered employment, in conjunction with a 12-itemed, shorter version of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression scale (CES-D), which examines the psycho-physiological symptoms of depression.

The outcomes of this study indicate that the objective realities of work, or the amount of hours spent in each job role, explained in part through the concept of role overload, accounted for depressive symptoms in both men and women.  This contrasts with the assumption that a sense of inequity directly causes such mental distress.  However, equity is, indeed a contributing factor involved with the experience of role overload.  Given that feelings of inequity are derived from the long hours and multiple roles each gender felt they encompassed, the two concepts are intertwined, and perpetuate each other.  In other words, role overload can be understood as the

objective experience men and women derive from their numerous tasks and responsibilities; when assigned meaning to such experiences, men and women consequently develop their subjective realities, as feelings of equity and inequity come about.  Inequitable feelings were separated by the genders, and males felt the financial and work-related burdens sitting on their shoulders, as women experienced the countering weight of the domestic obligations (Glass & Fujimoto, 1994).

Rosenfield (1992) concentrates on how the employment status of wives affects the mental health of their husbands.  This study cites previous research that portrays employment levels as determinants for positive overall functioning in the lives of women, while their spouses usually experience higher levels of distress.  The intriguing analyses that resulted from this study indicate spousal depression in itself does not result from employed wives.  Rather, husbands' levels of mental health begin to decline if their wives receive higher salaries, and if the housework begins to wane.  Likewise, women feel distress when their newly acquired employment does not prompt their husbands to help with domestic chores.

Another issue related to mental health status involves the differences produced between the genders.  Umberson, Meichu, House, Hopkins, and Slaten (1996) examined this phenomenon, and concur that men and women experience relationships that are unique from each other.  Women tend to have more in-depth relations and seem to reach out to people in need.  They identify with others and relate to people through a compassionate approach, whereas men utilize others in a practical, concrete manner (e.g., giving and receiving advice).

Because women tend to be more empathic in general, they also experience hardships more deeply than do men.  For example, in faulty relationships with children, women are more likely to personalize such difficulties, and take them to heart, compared to fathers.  However,

because women relate to their support systems (e.g., friends) on a deeper level than do men, they do not suffer higher levels of distress.  If they did not have such close relationships, the authors theorize their levels of depression would supercede those of men's.  Therefore, the intimacy that comes more naturally to women is a protective factor, it helps balance out other harsher realities and deficient relationships (Umberson et al., 1996).

Adding to this knowledge base is a study that was conducted by Mirowsky and Ross (1995), in which they sought to further understand the differing methods in which men and women express themselves.  They report that, indeed, men are more constrictive with their emotions, whereas women are more communicative and able to express themselves more fully.  Recurrent feelings among women include sadness, anxiety, depression, and pain; such sentiments are felt 30% more often by women than by men.  Although women do indeed feel happiness as often as their male counterparts, the transition from their fuller range of emotions (e.g., sadness, anxiety) in itself causes great distress.

Pretorius (1996) sought to explain how the two genders utilize social support when depressed. He differentiated between social support that has a direct effect (i.e., determining one's well being) versus social support to which serves an indirect purpose (i.e., stress reducing).  The outcomes demonstrate that women's health is affected by both the quality and quantity of people they can depend on in their lives, and although there are no differences in the amount of support available to each gender, there was a difference in the ways in which they were utilized.  The mere knowledge of social systems (i.e., reliable people) can indeed maintain women's mental health; the fact that they have people to rely on during dire time helps women from reaching levels of depression.  Therefore, social support has a direct effect on women's well

being.  Men's mental health, on the other hand, is not dictated as much by their network of friends and family members.

<div align="center">*Gender*</div>

*Gender and Connectedness*

Lee and Robbins (2000) furthered the understanding of the gender chasm that exists between men and women.  Their focus was how men and women connect with others, and their results indicate that men and women have both similarities and differences in their relations with others.  Specifically, men and women each need to connect and identify with other human beings; the amount of social connectedness between the genders does not vary.  This research contrasts with previous literature, which asserts that women require more affiliations of a social nature.

However, it is the reasons for socialization that differ.  Men desire relationships that are competitive in nature; such rivalry may help them identify who they are, and tap into specific strengths, weaknesses and interests.  Additionally, their overwhelming need for power and to reign hierarchically can be fulfilled through social challenges and comparisons.  Women, on the other hand, need intimates who are reliable, readily available, and immediately accessible (Lee & Robbins, 2000).

*Gendered Moonlighting Activities*

Nelson (1999) examined gender patterns of married couples residing within a rural, plebian community.  The concentration of this research is the  "moonlighting" activities that the couples participate in, which are defined as paid employment outside of their routine "9-5 jobs" (e.g., babysitting, mowing grass).  The author reports that, similar to paid positions, moonlighting activities are determined based on gender.  The male participants in this study

gravitated toward positions that are conventionally thought of as being "masculine," including hunting, yard work, and construction tasks.  The women, on the other hand, were involved in "feminine" moonlighting positions, such as babysitting and other caregiving duties, and selling homemade crafts.

Interestingly, the proximity in which men and women conducted their moonlighting duties also differed.  The masculine positions required the men to travel outside of the home (e.g., the forest, their backyards, their garages).  Women, on the other hand, typically remained within their homes to complete their moonlighting tasks.  Because of this, men were able to separate themselves fully with daily domestic chores, as they were not physically present to participate in washing the dishes, or cleaning up the living room.  Given that the women were, in fact within the confines of their homes, the household duties usually rested upon their shoulders; if they were babysitting their next door neighbor's child for example, it was feasible for them to do the laundry, or even take care of their own children simultaneously (Nelson, 1999).

Additionally, since women were left secluded in their homes, they were unable to fulfill their needs for socialization, as compared to their male counterparts.  Such isolation can be both frustrating and limiting, as previous research indicates women's socialization requirements are just as high, if not higher than men's.  Also noteworthy is the difference in praise and recognition that resulted from the moonlighting activities.  Whereas men usually participate in activities that have a "beginning" and "end," their progress can be identified and admired.  Women, on the other hand, tend to participate in moonlighting jobs which are continual (e.g., babysitting), in which the benefits (e.g., character development) are ongoing, and have less immediate effects (Nelson, 1999).

*Nontraditional Values*

Williams and Radin (1993) conducted a study to examine how the working mothers' employment statuses affected their children's lives. Specifically, mothers of adolescents who worked part time when their teenagers were younger, between the ages of 3-5 years and 7-9 years were included in this study. The aim of this study was to assess adolescent aspirations, and current grades and associate such findings with maternal employment in their earlier years. They found that teenage girls fared better when their mothers worked part time between the ages of 7-9 years. Boys, on the other hand, fared better when their mothers worked part time between the ages of 3-5 years. Interestingly, fathers who reduced their workloads to be with their children had no influence on adolescent functioning. This could be related to fathers placing their careers on the "back burner," and children interpreting such a choice as negative.

Booth and Amato (1994) examined "nontraditional" families, in which both parents worked, and sex roles were distributed liberally. The results indicated that as children grow up in such households, they, too develop nontraditional values. This was evidenced through adult daughters' tendencies to cohabitate with boyfriends prior to marriage. Additionally, spouses in nontraditional marriages are apt to divorce more readily, which was precisely the case in this study. Because children tended to live with their mothers growing up, as adults they reported having fewer attachments to their fathers.

*Father Care*

Zimmerman (2000) furthers the discussion surrounding nontraditional family values, by contrasting fulltime fathering, comprised of 1% of the population, with their conventional, maternal counterparts. As traditional as society may believe fulltime mothering to be, the existence of such mothers is rapidly decreasing, encompassing only 6-7% of the population.

Likewise, the current research surrounding domestic mothering has also declined, with the bulk of studies surrounding this issue between the 1960s throughout the 1970s, and considerably tapering off in the 1980s.  Such a transition in research trends mirrors a paradigm shift throughout the nation, in which women have become increasingly involved in the formal economy, while male participation within the home has been encouraged.

Although not represented greatly by numerical accounts, fulltime fathering may very well be a future pattern that becomes adopted by more families.  The lack of research revolving around this gendered role has led Zimmerman (2000) to ponder a plethora of issues, especially revolving around the application of fulltime mothering issues toward fathers.  For example, the inequity of household tasks and childcare responsibilities has been widely documented in the literature.  In other words, a traditional household typically contains a mother who stays at home and watches the children while the father is at work for an eight-hour workday.  However, when the father comes home in the evenings and on weekends, the domestic chores are not thereupon divided; it remains the mother's responsibility to provide continuous care without "lunch breaks" or "off-time."  A pertinent question revolves around fulltime fathers and career mothers: Do these families experience a similar dynamic? Additional questions involve the distribution of power and value for fulltime fathers.  Do they receive as little recognition for their work, while simultaneously experiencing diminished levels of mental health functioning (Zimmerman, 2000)?

The current study delved into these intriguing issues by examining similarities and differences among fulltime mothers with employed husbands to fulltime fathers with employed wives.  Interestingly, women in both categories (i.e., fulltime, domestic) experienced higher levels of fatigue than did the fathers in either category; career fathers experienced the least

amount.  One possible explanation for such a finding could be the female tendency to nurture and take care of others, while sacrificing her own needs and desires.  Such caregiving inclinations may manifest regardless of whether the female is employed formally or staying at home with the children. Additionally, career mothers automatically transfer to the caregiver role once home from work.  Such a transition did not take place among the career fathers, who participated in 13 hours less of childcare than female's with outside careers (Zimmerman, 2000).

The decision to stay at home also differs based on which gender remains within the household domain.  Traditional beliefs and religious convictions were prominent among the fulltime mother/career-father families, and most couples were aware that such arrangements would take place at the onset of their marital unions.  While fulltime father/career-mother families also placed high importance upon the parenting role, their decision for such arrangements were based on the father's nurturing qualities or the mother's high income rates. Both sets of couples reported high marital satisfaction, based on similar value structures and childrearing beliefs, appreciation for spousal contributions, and open communication (Zimmerman, 2000).

Although a mutual respect was evidenced within the households, there still remained societal pressures and denigration toward fulltime parents.  Domestic mothers felt pressures about relinquishing their educational and monetary worth, while the home-based fathers felt ostracized for partaking in such unusual positions.  Whereas fulltime mothers did find relief within certain outside realms (i.e., religious organizations), fulltime fathers did not extend themselves into the community, for fear of rejection and misunderstanding.  Additionally, because their status was grossly underrepresented, fulltime fathers did not have many role models, or extensive networks of fellow males in similar situations (Zimmerman, 2000).

Darling-Fisher and Tiedje (1990) found that fathers provided little childcare for their offspring. When fathers were responsible for childcare duties, they tended to play with their children, leaving the harder responsibilities for their wives. Levels of participation also varied based on maternal employment. The fulltime mothers received moderate levels of help, whereas when wives were employed full time, fathers contributed more. Interestingly, if mothers were employed on a part-time basis, fathers contributed the least amount of effort into childcare and household duties.

*Opportunities that Enable Mothers to Stay at Home With Their Children*

*Family Daycare*

In addition to focusing on childcare within the context of two opposing extremes (i.e., maternal care, daycare), it is important to acknowledge the "middle ground," in which an attempt to compromise such extremes is made by having family daycare programs. Atkinson (1988) embarked upon the experiences of FDC providers, and little research had been examined in this realm prior to her earlier research. Women primarily report becoming an FDC provider to experience the benefits of fulltime motherhood, in that they want to be a part of their children's development, and feel it is necessary to instill parental values and provide daily nurturance and support. Likewise, they also report enjoying children in general, and are fulfilled by engaging in the lives of their own children, as well as those who attend their daycare. FDC providers also draw upon elements of the working mother, in that their provided care for outside children, allows them a weekly salary, thus enabling them to contribute to the family's financial earnings.

FDC providers have been reported as having many stressors, as it is generally considered to be a low-status job, one that requires little or no education, but is nevertheless physically draining. Longer hours are typical in this career, as most women make accommodations for their

clientele, the employed mothers who partake in their daycares and who need childcare for both their employed hours and the travel time to get to their jobs, which generally averages out to be 50-hours per week.  Additionally, this strenuous job, which entails being exclusively in the company of young children and which provides social isolation with little adult stimulation is cites as a source of frustration (Atkinson, 1988).

For the present study, Atkinson (1988) conducted open-ended interviews with FDC providers to obtain their perspectives on the services they provide and how their jobs affect them, their children, and other family members; content analysis was used to interpret the interview findings.  94% of the participants were caring for their own children in addition to outside clientele.

The women studied indicated that the joys of being an FDC worker were a combination of working with their own, and other children, as well as having the luxury of being one's own boss and the flexibility that come without such hierarchical employment.  Interestingly, the difficulties entailed in this job were the obstacles that came with parental interactions, including parents who tried to manipulate the system.  For example, oftentimes parents would be late picking up their children, or would not make timely payments, and expect extensions of rules and regulations to accommodate their predicaments.  This comes as a result of running an operation from home. Furthermore, since recruitment for clientele mainly relied on word-of-mouth procedures, most of the parents had known the FDC providers for quite some time, and didn't treat them as professionals, which proved to be problematic and awkward (Atkinson, 1988).

Since FDC providers were essentially combining the fulltime elements into a job, they reported an ability to partake in household activities throughout the day, such as laundry and

other household duties.  Surprisingly, they did not report social isolation, and felt able to combine their childcare duties with necessary errands that came about.  While most of the women became FDC providers to be salaried fulltime mothers, findings regarding their own children's welfare were mixed.  On the one hand, they found it to be advantageous to spend quality and quantity time with their children, although they found their children to become resentful at the care extended to the outside children and required additional comfort and reassurance (Atkinson, 1988).

Individuals employed in the FDC industry have to incorporate their professional and personal lives accordingly.  Indeed, the mothers studied were asked how they integrated the two realms, and how such a merger interfered with their private lives and households.  Most mothers reported that it was not an intrusion, and made necessary accommodations.  For example, space concerns required special designations, and specific closets, cubbies and corners were allocated to the daycare children; in other homes, mothers combined their own children's space and materials with that of their daycare children.  On the other hand, most of the FDC providers had special chosen rooms that the children could congregate, while other locations were strictly "off limits." Additionally, it was perceived by the women that they took the necessary safety requirements to ensure the wellbeing of their children and clientele.  However, most of the women did not report such precautionary measures to be inconvenient, as it also benefited their own children's welfare (Atkinson, 1988).

A second article by Atkinson (1993) addressed differences among unpaid fulltime mothers, FDC providers, and mothers working outside the home for wages.  In this article, Atkinson (1993) sought to understand the differences of the two groups of fulltime mothers and working mothers in regard to their traditional beliefs in the rewards derived from being at home,

as well as the importance placed on such domesticity.  The author also sought to understand the importance the two groups of working mothers (i.e., FDC providers and those employed outside the home), and how they differed from the mothers who were unwaged.  Finally, knowledge of FDC training and economic rewards were examined.  The three groups of mothers responded to a series of statements from The Home as Haven scale, as well as The Life Role Salience Scale, which described the rewards of occupational and parenting roles and the importance of the traditional role of motherhood.  Comparisons were made between FDC providers, unemployed fulltime mothers, and mothers who worked outside of the home to understand their realities.

The results indicate that FDC providers valued their occupational role higher than both non-working mothers and mothers who were employed outside of the home.  Both groups of fulltime mothers responded similarly to the emphasis placed on staying at home, while few differences were found among working and FDC parents in regard to the rewards derived from staying home with the children (Atkinson, 1993).

Whereas FDC mothers derive the "best of both worlds," by combining their traditional motherhood duties of raising children while financially contributing to household incomes, there is an exceptionally high turnover rate among those who attemp this career path.  Among the FDC providers who participated in this study, 35% withdrew from their caregiving duties within a year's time, and 29% reported little commitment to FDC continuance.  Reasons for such departure could involve the lack of rewards and income that are derived from such positions.  Indeed, yearly salaries included less than $5,000 for mothers who left their FDC endeavors (Atkinson, 1993).

Moreover, Atkinson (1993) found that FDC mothers who seek careers have more "professional" statures, in which they could continually increase salaries, and progress in their

career developments, as opposed to the stagnancy found in FDC careers.  The bind that all of the mothers in this study experienced was a sense of sacrifice; mothers at work felt they were missing out on time spent with their children and spouses.  Similarly, mothers at home relinquished social stimulation, and adult conversations that can be found in the workforce. Most mothers found FDC work to be a temporary role to enable them to provide care for their children while they were young, but expressed a desire to reenter the labor force upon their maturation.

Another of Atkinson's articles examined the stress levels of fulltime mothers, FDC providers, and mothers employed outside of the home.  Stress levels of mothers, regardless of the occupational roles they have chosen, have historically been extremely high. For employed mothers juggling the demands of working life with home life can be a feat in itself.  Likewise, fulltime mothers, who eliminate their working roles and responsibilities can experience similar levels of stress.  Mothers who incorporate the satisfaction of staying at home with the financial gain their statuses have brought have traditionally been categorized as lacking prestige, while working long hours with little autonomy.  Stress levels of all three sets of mothers were measured on the Langner 22-item test, indicating both psychological and psychophsiological (e.g., headaches, sour stomach) stressors (Atkinson, 1992).

The findings indicate that FDC mothers have the highest levels of stress among the mothers in the three categories.  Contributing factors to their stress levels include the long employment hours that are commonly associated with FDC positions and lower incomes than that of the working mothers.  Sixty seven of the FDC providers earned less than $5,000 annually, while only 16% of the employed mothers earned less than $5,000 a year.  Additionally, the FDC providers reported low interaction levels between their spouses and children, as husbands of

FDC providers tended to work later.  Education levels were significantly lower among FDC workers and their families, which could have been a contributing factor to limited job selection, among both FDC worker and their husbands (Atkinson, 1992).

Spousal incomes were remarkably similar among FDC workers and mothers employed outside of the home.  Atkinson (1992) speculated that a possible reason for this phenomenon was that non-employed mothers were not required to become employed due to the reliance on their husband's higher paying salaries.  Because of the resulting lower family income based on their husband's earnings, FDC providers may become employed in such positions to avoid paying the high costs of outside daycare centers.

The unique difficulties that FDC workers face include lower salaries and longer working hours than mothers employed outside of the home.  Additionally, they face higher family demands, with the combination of the low wages their husbands bring home, more children to contend with, scarce husband-child interactions, and lower education levels.  Regardless of these obstacles, FDC mothers feel that they are able to uphold their traditional mothering roles, and feel that it is a solution to the dilemmas (i.e., work vs. stay at home) most mothers confront (Atkinson, 1992).

Atkinson's specialized focus on family daycare centers enables readers to understand the dilemmas such workers experience from different angles.  Her research on FDC workers was among the first, and such a revolutionary breakthrough offers piercing understandings into a career focus that had not been examined in previous years.

*Maternity Leave*

Issues relating to maternity leave correlate, and therefore contribute to the concept of fulltime mothers by examining women who embark upon prolonged time periods at home with

their children.  Maternity leave serves several functions, including the healthy recuperation of the mother upon giving childbirth, strong infant attachment levels, as well as nurturance of the developing mother-child bond.  Hyde, Klein, Essex, and Clark (1995) investigated the effect of employment levels, mental health, and the length of maternity leave on women's mental health four months postpartum.  Two theoretical frameworks were used to understand the functioning of mothers' mental health.  The first theory, termed the scarcity hypothesis, describes multiple roles as stressful, and sees the addition of more life responsibilities (e.g., the addition of motherhood to an employed mothers schedule) as resulting in high psychological distress.  An opposing theory, titled the enhancement hypothesis, suggests that with the addition of roles, people become stimulated and experience higher levels of esteem and self worth.

For the current study, Hyde et. al (1995), hypothesized that women employed at the four-month postpartum period would fare worse psychologically (i.e., would experience higher levels of depression, anxiety, and anger) in comparison to mothers who remained at home due to the lengthier allotments of maternity leave, thus supporting the scarcity hypothesis.  Additionally, they sought to understand how the enhancement hypothesis played a part in maternity leave and maternal mental health.  Specifically, they hypothesized that the employed mothers who experienced enhancement variables (e.g., work rewards, marital rewards) would fare better psychologically and that women who take longer maternity leaves woild facilitate physical and psychological adjustments, enabling them to cope better.  Lastly, it was believed that variables such as supportive marriages, infant temperaments, and the qualities of the parental and occupational roles would also play influential factors in psychological adjustment levels.

Five hundred and seventy pregnant women participated in the current Wisconsin Maternity Leave and Health Project (WMLH).  Mothers were studied three times throughout the

duration of this study; during pregnancy, and again after one and four months postpartum. The following assessments were administered: The CES-D assessed mothers' self reported depression symptoms; anxiety and anger were measured by the Spielberger State Anxiety Inventory; job-role qualities were assessed by the Job-Role Quality Scale; infant temperament was measured on the Infant's Distress to Limits Scale; the Partner Role Quality scale determined the marital relationship; and the Bose Index assessed occupational status. Other noteworthy measurements included maternal work statuses (i.e., paid or unpaid), the percentage of the woman's income toward the overall family income, perceived divisions of labor, and the length of maternity leave (Hyde, et al, 1995).

The study produced many intriguing findings. Women employed four months after giving birth showed no signs of depression or anger, but their anxiety levels were significant compared to their non-working counterparts. Similarly, all of the women studied with four-month old infants displayed anxiety levels, but displayed no indication of depression or anger. It is possible that both scarcity and enhancement hypotheses interacted and balanced each other to provide alleviation of depression and anger. Another producer of anxiety was the number of hours worked per week, as mothers who worked longer hours (i.e., more than 20 hours) became anxious (Hyde, et al., 1995).

The chief focal point of this study was to assess the effect of the length of maternity leave on maternal mental health. Although shorter maternity leave in itself did not predict low levels of mental health functioning, there was an indirect relationship. Mothers who returned to work earlier experienced marital difficulties, which in turn influenced their depressed states. In contrast to homemakers, a persistent theme includes similar nonexistent depression and anger levels, but higher feelings of anxiety (Hyde, et al., 1995).

The results of this study reveal the complexities involved with maternity leave and well-being.  Although there are no concise directions found within this research, the authors imply that returning to work earlier affects psychological functioning (i.e., anxiety).  This implication should be considered when determining policy laws, and research of this nature should be incorporated into the debates arguing for increased maternal leave.  At the time of this study, it was reported that President G.H. Bush vetoed several attempts to pass legislation for such maternity laws.  When President Clinton became president, he signed the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993, which provides 12 weeks maternity leave for both mothers and fathers.  Such trends indicate the association among the direction of public policy laws and the current political stance held in the country (Hyde, et al., 1995).

A second study by the same authors assesses the length of maternity leave and the quality of mother-infant interactions.  Previous research has helped provide a foundation for the multidimensional factors associated with mother-child interactions in relation to a leave of absence from employment (i.e., maternity leave).  Such factors include characteristics of the infant (e.g., temperament, gender), characteristics of the mother (e.g., emotional stability, received support), and characteristics of maternal employment (e.g., time of reentry into the workforce, part-time/full-time statuses).  Clark, Hyde, Essex, and Klein (1997) addressed the following issues in the current study: the quality of the mother-child bond upon the mother forced to return to work after four months postpartum; the relationship between stressor and protective factors (e.g., maternal depression; spousal support) to the quality of the mother-child relationship; and the interaction between the length of maternity leave and the stressor/protective factors.

This study proved the existence of a  relationship between the quality of mother-child interactions and the length of maternity leave.  Contributing reasons included the protective factors, such as child temperament and maternal mental health.  Depressed mothers and mothers who perceived their children to be ill tempered returned to work in shorter time periods, which may have further impeded parent-child attachment.  The negative effect of shorter maternity leave highlights the important relationship developments that take place during this time period.  Again, Clark, et al. (1997) discussed the public policy implications that can be derived from studies of this nature.  Parental leave policies should, according to the authors, incorporate the individual reactions mothers experience upon giving birth, and designate appropriate time to heal and to bond with their newborn infants.  Although The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act allows 12 weeks of postpartum leave, mothers do not receive monetary compensation, and it only applies to large corporations, i.e., those comprised of at least 50 employees.

*Implications*

*A Critique on Belsky*

Accumulative review of "motherhood" studies reveals what issues in this research are lacking and need further examination.  A review of Belsky's work (1986, 1988, 1990, 2001) shows that although the role of the mother is critiqued and her presence emphasized, her actual experiences, thoughts, and feelings are clearly ignored.  The research also tends to take place within the sole confines of laboratory settings as opposed to naturalistic environments such as daycare centers, playgrounds, and the family household itself.

Belsky's (1986, 1988, 1990, 2001) methodological approach focuses on large-scaled, quantitative studies in which his hypotheses are confirmed by the amassed statistics, ultimately leading to conclusive discoveries and concrete implications.  However, among such studies it

would be better to incorporate qualitative work that allows individualized voices to develop

theories based on the content of their unique messages.

*Further Considerations*

Additional voids within the literature can be filled by addressing questions such as:  How

do women juggle the multitude of responsibilities entailed in their fulltime mothering roles, and

what are their reactions (e.g., pleasure, boredom, etc.) to such tasks?  How do full time mothers

think they are viewed by the world at large? What are their experiences and reactions as they

return to the workforce?  Furthermore, studies that address the following topics would be

worthwhile: a comparison of the identities fulltime mothers possess to that of their former

working selves; the sacrifices fulltime mothers make in life when they stay at home and raise

their children; overall adjustment to their fulltime mothering responsibilities; and messages such

women like to extend toward society.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

*Research Design*

This chapter describes the methodological approach that was utilized in the current study, beginning with research studies that underscore the value of conducting qualitative research with women participants.  Subsequently, a general synopsis outlining the theoretical precepts of qualitative research segues into a specific delineation of the current study, including the demographic criteria of the participants, measuring tool, and research procedures (i.e., data collection and analyses).  Finally, a brief description of the pilot study is provided, which serves to impart insight into the actual dissertation data regarding potential obstacles and allows for a continuation of successful strategies.

*Women's Issues and Qualitative Research*

The appropriate design selection for the current research was that of inductive, qualitative methodology, as the essence of this study sought to discern the personalized, in-depth journey of each woman's transition.  Jayaratne and Stewart (1991) discuss how the use of qualitative research with women and their corresponding issues can be an ideal approach, in that it parallels the "stereotypical" values (e.g., process-oriented vs. outcome-oriented) which women hold in high regard.  As a result, they are at ease when conveying their innermost lives, and thrive in such a humanistic research design.  They feel as if they are being "heard," as their communication styles (e.g., open, verbal) are accommodated and utilized.

Farnsworth (1996) concurs with the notion that women can thrive from the qualitative research.  The author found that female participants benefited from the sensitive and understanding approach qualitative researcher employed, including the acknowledgment of their

tribulations and hardships in a delicate manner and providing a "listening ear" in a non-

hierarchical manner. Such women participants were able to feel genuinely accounted for, not

just represented numerically as "one of the crowd" but as a storyteller whose visions would assist

others with similar predicaments. Additionally, the results of such qualitative techniques

allowed women to feel that their issues were being described according to their own parameters

(e.g., terminology) as opposed to those of the researcher.

*Overview of Qualitative Research*

Qualitative research characteristically serves to formulate ideas and theories; it seeks to

understand subjective, individualized realities of its participants. Qualitative researchers may

conduct in-depth case studies with individuals or groups, immerse themselves in the participation

of a culture/community, or observe the on-goings of the community members from afar.

Qualitative investigations are discovery-oriented, and upon entering a research project, the

examiner should have no assumptions about the research findings that will be encountered

(Steckler, McLeroy, Goodman, Bird, & McCormick, 1992).

Rather than answering specific research questions, qualitative research seeks to unravel

the unique perspectives that individuals, or groups of individuals have. This generates data that

are rich with insight and ultimately modify the way in which we understand the "feel" of the

research issue. Methodological techniques involved with qualitative research include open-

ended interviews, ethnographic field notes, and subject observation. Both the participation (e.g.,

"onsite" observations) and interpretation (e.g., reviewing tape transcriptions) of qualitative data

can be time consuming and expensive, requiring extensive dedication and endurance (Steckler et

al., 1992).

According to Shank (1994), qualitative research defines itself from a *realist* perspective, claiming that issues are comprised of smaller elements which hold specific character, but simultaneously declares that the sum of that phenomena is compelling in itself.  The analogue provided in the study was the concept of reading a book, in which letters and words are important and necessary factors but the feel of the paragraphs, chapter, and book collectively are also vital.

Because this research utilized females and their corresponding issues, while forgoing hypothetical reasoning, a grounded theory approach was deemed most appropriate.  Grounded theory begins with investigative phenomena, of which the researcher enters without preconceived notions.  Such a "blank-slated" mindset enables the researcher, upon examination, to research objectively the information as it begins to emerge.  At such a time, theory-building may begin, during which time the researcher compares and contrasts such findings to the existing literature (Creswell, 1998).  Babbie (2002) provide a succinct description of the Grounded Theory Method, in that the researcher discerns the materialization of pertinent theoretical information, to which related data is linked.  This is followed by an examination of how such data correlates by creating specific associations, while unrelated ideas are extinguished.  Finally, an overview of the findings are depicted by usage of "narratives," or other storytelling techniques. During this study, the researcher followed the aforementioned pattern by discovering innovative information evolving throughout the interview process, linking the data together, formulating constructs, coding the data and providing the case studies.  Finally, the generation of theoretical explanations occurred at the offset of the study.

*Participants*

The researcher obtained participants by soliciting local parenting agencies, daycare centers, and through the process of "networking."  In order to examine women who were experiencing similar life paths, the criteria selection sought to study women with comparable demographic makeup.  Mothers of children who fit the demographic criteria include domestic mothers who were between the ages of 28-35 years, Caucasian, and fell within a middle-class socioeconomic status.  The rationale behind the aforementioned criteria describes revolved around the first three women who initially volunteered as participants for the study, pilot study included.  Because they were similar in demographics, the researcher chose the remaining participants as those who were very close in age, financial standing and ethnicity.

Furthermore, they had earned at least a bachelor's degree at an accredited university, with a history of employment in jobs that were professional, educational, or managerial in nature. The reasoning behind such criteria revolves around the nucleus of the study, in which fulltime mothers are those who have chosen to be stay at home due to an intrinsic value system.  One example of a women who was not considered a prime candidate (i.e., who "extraneously" became a fulltime mother) was one who had a low wage job prior to having children, and had been seeking an escape route from the traditional labor force prior to her current fulltime motherhood status.

The researcher interviewed four female participants and gathered insight into their worldviews without encountering theoretical saturation.  Strauss and Corbin (1998) instruct researchers to discontinue data collection upon theoretical saturation that is, the obtainment of repetitive, stale material which has been stated earlier in the research and does not contribute innovative clarification to the imminent research topic.

No further criteria were placed upon the educational, professional, or developmental positions of the spouses. However, participants needed to be married and living together within the same household. Additionally, the children involved in this study were the biological offspring of their parents.

*Measuring Tool*

A set of pre-determined topics had been devised to uncover the unique realities that fulltime mothers experience. Such topics included the decision-making process involved with their fulltime statuses, their actual realities, and the influence that staying home has had on their personalized identities, their family, and their community relationships. To uphold a comfortable and fluid exchange, the researcher did not refer to a tangible "questionnaire" throughout the course of the interview, which had been devised in conjunction with proficient qualitative researchers. Rather, the following topics, which comprised the concept of "measuring tool," were reviewed by the researcher prior to conducting of the interviews, and used at appropriate times when prompted by the participant's direction:

1. When did you decide to be a fulltime mother?

2. Discuss influences/values/people that may or may not have affected your decision.

3. Describe your parents' philosophy on mothering, does your philosophy differ from your parents?

4. Describe experiences in your early childhood/adolescent/young adulthood that may have contributed to your decision to stay at home.

5. How have your responsibilities within the family unit changed by becoming a fulltime mother? How have they changed outside the family (e.g., in the community/church)?

6.  How have your responsibilities within the family unit remained intact? How have they changed outside the family?

7.  How do you feel about yourself?  Has this view changed since becoming a fulltime mother? If so, please explain.

8.  Describe your relationships/interactions with immediate family members (e.g., spouse, children, "extended family"), peers, and the community.  Have your relationships/interactions changed since becoming a fulltime mother? Do you feel you are "viewed" differently by your family, peers, and/or community?

9.  Describe sources of support that enable you to feel valued and provide you with a "listening ear" and/or feedback.

10. Describe your personality (e.g., characteristics, temperament).

11. Describe your needs, and whether or not they are fulfilled.

12. Describe the personality of your spouse/children.  What do you feel are their specific needs?

13. If you were to give advice to a woman who was debating whether or not to be a fulltime mother, what would you say?

14. If you could send a message to the general public (e.g., writing a book, giving a publicized speech) correcting or emphasizing any viewpoint on fulltime mothering, what would you say?

15. How do you believe our society caters to employed mothers? How do you believe our society caters to fulltime mothers?

16. What is your opinion of the pros and cons of fulltime mothers? What are the pros and cons of working mothers?

17. What public/media influences can you relate to (e.g., political parties, television shows)? Which public/media influences can you not relate to?

18. Where do you see yourself in five years from now? Ten years? Twenty years?

19. Describe your and your husband's reactions/interactions during the different developmental stages of your children.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher explored potential obstacles within the interview. In particular, the researcher attempted to control noisy interruptions (e.g., holding interviews during naptime) and avoided sensitive issues that may have otherwise made subjects feel devalued or defensive. For example, the participants in this study might have taken offense if they felt undermined in any way; therefore, the researcher was mindful of semantic usage, and was both straightforward and respectful. Additional obstacles might have affected the outcome of the interviews where participants with adverse attitudes, or family members who had undergone significant trauma (e.g., death). Moreover, Shank (1994) advises that researchers to be prepared for how the intended dialogue may diverge from its expected route, and how and when to discard prepared questions when the interview turns in an unexpected direction.

*Recruitment Procedures*

Before collecting data, the researcher submitted an "Application for Approval of Research Involving Human Subjects," provided by the Institutional Review Board (i.e., "IRB") at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Part of the approval is an informed consent form (Appendix A), which was distributed to and signed by each participant. The informed consent includes sections detailing the purpose, procedures, risks/benefits, and confidentiality that are integral to the research design, followed by a section indicating their

ability to withdraw from the study at any time.  Once reviewed, each participant signed the form and kept a copy, which also contained phone numbers of research advisors.

Mothers who were interested in participating in this research contacted the researcher by calling a provided phone number.  The mothers were screened over the telephone by the researcher to determine if they met the criteria.  Questions used to screen the mothers are available in Appendix B.  Eligible participants were provided a description of the research project, after which the researcher assessed their continued interest.  Before beginning the interviews, participants were briefed on the purpose and structure of the interview, and informed that the sessions would be audio-taped.  Participants were informed of their right to withdraw and how their confidentiality would be managed.  When such formalities were agreed upon, a date and time was determined and an interview granted.

*Data Collection Procedures*

When proper subject sampling and briefing had been completed, the researcher conducted an audio-taped, individual interview with each participant lasting approximately two hours.  Interviews took place in the homes of the participants in order to ensure their comfort and convenience.  Furthermore, interviews were conducted on a one-time basis, with the exception of clarifying ambiguous material, and verifying accurate information.  Participants were then debriefed and had the opportunity to ask questions.

According to Liebscher (1998), studies of qualitative research lack precision with regard to specific data collection techniques, analysis and reporting styles, which can make the planning of research stages challenging.  Qualitative research analysis takes place simultaneously with observation, and the essence of qualitative research (e.g., credibility, transferability) cannot be established in the absence of data.

Establishing reliability and validity are essential research elements.  One potential

obstacle that the researcher was prepared to encounter is a phenomenon quite common to

qualitative research.  Because the researcher's viewpoints vastly differed from how others may

have interpreted the data, problems with reliability were possible (Babbie, 2002).  In other

words, coded data can be analyzed from many different angles, based upon the experiences and

theoretical orientation of the researcher.  One way that this phenomenon was addressed was in

assessing the observations compared against other researcher's analytical assessments.  In

particular, the audio-taped interviews, coded "family trees," and coded data were reviewed by a

research class which specialized in qualitative research.  Hearing the different viewpoints of the

class members, along with the research professor attempted to establish reliability.  A second

way in which the researcher sought reliability was to provide participants with an actual copy of

the transcribed interview, upon which the women were encouraged to modify their prior

responses, if necessary.

Babbie (2002) describes the process of ascertaining validity in qualitative research.  In

most cases attentive listening techniques and the act of "being there" can generate high validity

levels.  Additionally, the current researcher sought to enter each interview with an objective

"blank slate" approach, discarding personal misconceptions and values.  To validate different

research interpretations, usage of extensive quotations from the interviews were cited throughout

each narrative.

*Data Analysis Procedures*

Once the interview process started, and concepts began to emerge, questions and

relationships developed and evolved.  Open coding was implemented, allowing data to be

depicted.  Data within each case study that had similar qualities were categorized together to form constructs, which are the basis of developing theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

An example of a construct that emerged from the data revolved around "adjustment to motherhood."  Different mothers defined this process in opposition to each other, as such definitions had been formulated over the course of their lives, and refined through a variety of influences (e.g., family belief systems, etc.).  By categorizing subjects' constructs, the researcher was then able to name such systems either through existing paradigms, or by "in vivo code" which was particularly utilized during the course of this study.

Once such constructs were identified, it was important to develop reasonable names, which embodied their true meanings, and were assessed by evaluating their unique contextual properties.  Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicate that there are different options involved with open coding, and can be analyzed in terms of each individualized sentence, which can be beneficial particularly at the onset of the research, by helping to develop categories.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe the implementation of axial coding as the following step to further explain data.  Axial coding is the process of relating categories with their subcatagories to offer crisp and precise elucidation.  Subcategories seek to answer the *when, where, why, how and with what consequences* questions.  When such questions were explored in the current dissertation, affiliations amongst data were observed and made sense of, thereby ensuring the continuance of the theory building process.  Furthermore, it was important to examine both structure (which describes why certain phenomena occur), and process (which explains how such phenomena transpire).  It was essential to take both into consideration during this research.  For example, in addition to understanding why mothers chose specific values, it was important to understand how such values came about in their lives (e.g., familial value).

Selective coding was another means by which to depict the data, by involving the refinement and union of categories.  The concentration was not on the fine details, but on a democratic feel of the data.  It was during this process that thematic information started to evolve, and answers to the research questions began to formulate.  Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe that when such central, or core categories are identified, an elimination of excessive and unnecessary data can ensue, thus filling the voids of poorly developed categories.

Finally, Stauss and Corbin (1998) describe process coding, which involves examining the action/interaction of data based on contextual variables.  Researchers must observe data in various environments to understand the consistency of such phenomena.  Relating this to the current research study, the research examined subjects' belief systems against varying frameworks and environments.

*Pilot Test*

The difficulties in conducting a research interview can be surmised through the following quote, "Interviewing is rather like a marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets" (Wilhelm, Craig, Glover, Allen, & Huffman, 2000).  In essence, there are many factors in need of consideration before carrying out an interview, those of which cannot be thoroughly anticipated in the conceptional stages.

Wilhelm et al. (2000) discuss some of the overlooked interviewing necessities, which include the development of rapport between researcher and subject(s), and the maintenance of an appropriate research environment.  Furthermore, an understanding for the magnitude of preparation involved, both from a technical perspective (e.g., tape-recording considerations) as well as conceptually (e.g., redirecting a tangential thought) should be considered.

For purposes of the current pilot study, I approached a 29-year old fulltime mother, whom will be referred to as "Joan."  At the time of the interview, Joan had one son, named "Brian" who was 10-months of age.  Joan grew up in Fairfax, Virginia in a household comprised of her mother and father, who currently remain married, and a brother, who is three years her junior.  Upon graduating from high school, she attained a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, which took her approximately 4.5 years to complete.  At the time she gave birth, she was employed as an executive assistant for a large business firm, and Joan was responsible for the maintenance of several projects, and was expected to travel with the company on a monthly basis to several nationwide cities.

Joan's life has been a whirlwind of important transitions since she met "Alan" in late 1998.  They wed the following September of 1999, less than a year in duration from their first encounter; she became pregnant shortly thereafter in the month of July, 2000.  Brian was born in April 2001, whereupon Joan quit her job and became a fulltime mother.

The following passages relay information that were obtained with Joan regarding her fulltime mothering experience, conducted on March 27, 2001.  The duration of the interview was two hours in length, and took place at approximately 7:00 p.m., after Brian had retired for the evening, and before Alan returned home from work.  It took place in Joan's living room, and she and the researcher sat facing one another on her couch.  The interview, in its' entirety, had been videotaped to assess both non-verbal and verbal communication styles and techniques. Assessments were made by the students and professor of a qualitative research class, of whom reviewed the videotape and provided in-depth feedback and analyses.

*Content-Oriented Themes*

Throughout the interview, several themes emerged that provide insight into the conceptualization of fulltime mothering issues, such as the slow evolutionary changes that took place within Joan's personality. This can be illustrated through proclamations of increased patience and contentment with life, along with the perceived unselfishness that is involved with her definition of a successful mother. Additional information that materialized during the interview included Joan's busy workload (e.g., she would consider going back to work a "break"), and how she dealt with the overwhelming emotions and responsibilities attached to motherhood.

A comparison between her "former" employed lifestyle to her current routine were articulated, with an emphasis on both the sacrifices she has made, along with the rewards that have been reaped. An understanding of the complex interpersonal changes (e.g., marriage, friends) that have taken place in her life was evidenced throughout the interview. Joan also expressed several opinions that represent her value system, such as feelings of disdain toward employed mothers, indicating that they were relinquishing their utmost responsibilities, leaving their children during the workday as if they were "pets."

One theme that is not emphasized in the current questionnaire is the concept of "religiosity." However, it became clear that religious beliefs had a strong influence on Joan's decision to be a fulltime mother. Once mentioned by the participant, however, the researcher quickly devised mental questions, which flowed in a spiritual direction (e.g., "You mentioned that God would want you to fulfill your destiny as a fulltime mother, and I would like you to share more with me regarding this issue"). In the future, the researcher will immediately gauge

such values that the subject seems to operate from, and address them, regardless of their inclusion on the question list.

*Process-Oriented Themes*

Furthermore, issues arose that provided the researcher with practice on how to redirect problematic issues that may come about during future interviews.  There were a few awkward pauses throughout the interview process, in which the researcher tried to fill with idle observations, or meaningless questions.  For future reference, the researcher will appreciate such silences, utilizing them as a technique to acquire additional information.

Unconditional positive regard, empathy, and active listening were also evidenced in a non-judgmental environment throughout the exchange.  Although the researcher was able to direct which way the interview took, Joan did most of the talking, and shared her experiences using many personalized illustrations and references.  The researcher listened throughout the two hours, with the exception of intermittent questions (e.g., "You mentioned talking to several people about their fulltime mothering experiences, and I am wondering how their accounts compare to your reality"), as well as providing summarizations with each conceptual "pause" (e.g., It sounds like you feel that staying at home with Brian is a privilege, for which you are deeply grateful").  Joan appeared appreciative, both at the opportunity to share her story, as well as the chance to engage in adult conversation, a luxury in which she rarely gets to indulge.

*Further Considerations from the Pilot Study*

Although not apparent throughout the interview, there were some technical difficulties, such as the tape not recording in a smooth manner.  Upon review of the tape, it appeared that there was an obvious mishap, as the dialogue was choppy and oftentimes repetitive, making transcription a challenge.  Also, the researcher brought a piece of paper containing a list of the

research questions, but did not have a notebook to place it on. A household fashion catalogue was used, since Joan did not have a notebook on hand; however, the catalogue did not fit nicely atop my lap, and wobbled throughout the interview, causing periodic distractions. Finally, because the interview took longer than expected (the researcher indicated that it would only be one hour in length), Alan came home in the midst of the interview and began making a commotion in the kitchen (i.e., using the microwave, pots, and pans). The researcher will learn the meaning of succinct precision, especially with families who are on a tight schedule and are paying a great favor in their interview participation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Qualitative Research

*Introduction*

This chapter provides four narratives of the women (i.e., FL, HP, QT, RZ) selected for the current dissertation study, and details their lives based upon information derived from their interviews. From this point forth, the semantics used in the first three chapters to describe fulltime mothers are replaced by the term "SAHM" (i.e., stay-at-home mother), as this was the term participants collectively utilized. Additionally, one participant (i.e., FL) expressed distaste toward the word "fulltime mother," indicating that when she was employed fulltime within the workforce after the birth of her first child, she had identified herself as a "fulltime mother."

The question list posed in chapter one provided a loose sense of guidance for which each interview would be directed, particularly during a "lull" period; however, in most cases, the flow of the interview was dictated by the participant herself. Each interview was extensively reviewed, upon which conceptual data was gathered and correlated, generating the specification of thematic patterns. It is through description of such patterns that each woman's "story" is conveyed; we understand participant's lives through such segmented (e.g., "childhood"; "marriage") examination. Thus, each of the four narratives has different themes that pertain to the individual lifestyle of the corresponding participant.

The following figure provides a brief summary of the four narratives that will be discussed in this chapter:

**FL:** A 31-year old woman, whose recent transition from career to stay-at-home mother is captured in the current research.  FL had previously been employed as an elementary school teacher, a job which brought her tremendous satisfaction.  She struggles with her recent career loss, as she had conceptualized herself as a schoolteacher from a very young age.  She believes that being at home is advantageous for her two school-aged sons, and eschews the attention given toward the mother-infant bond.  Being at home has alleviated her hectic schedule, which included transporting her children to their schools and recreational activities.

**HP:**  A 33-year old woman who is raising a 10-month old infant and preparing for the impending birth of her second child.  She finds it hard to acclimate toward the constant interaction her daughter demands, and feels that her stay-at-home status lacks mental stimulation.  She seeks solace from her mothering duties during periodic free time, and from the overall belief that her family will benefit by the sacrifices she has made by staying at home.

**QT:** A 34-year old woman who reaped the benefits of motherhood after the birth of her first born child, whose mild mannered temperament allowed QT her much needed autonomy.  However, shortly thereafter, QT gave birth to twin babies with health problems, and she found her mental health declining due to their constant supervision requirements.  She finds refuge by interacting with her husband, and through her enduring spirituality.

**RZ:**  A 31-year old woman with twin toddlers, and whose passion and appreciation for life stems in part, from her religiosity and is extended toward her husband and children.  The parental influences during her childhood included a jaded stay-at-home mother who left the family unit, while her father clumsily adopted the "maternal" role.  Her former teaching role currently transcends into her mothering realm, as she enthusiastically structures her family's days with enriched learning opportunities.

**Figure 1 Participant Summary**

*Thematic Overview*

Figure 1 offers an overview of the themes that detail the four SAHMs specific processes involved in experiencing motherhood.  The figure provides an understanding of how such individual themes interrelate between fellow participants; when linking the four women's themes, universal "generalized subjects" emerge depicting common sentiments.

Because the narratives seek to relay comprehensive accounts of the women's experiences, the themes and generalized subjects include issues that took place within the women's lives prior to becoming mothers, which may have influenced the decision to become a SAHM (e.g., "Formative Years," "Family").  Additionally, thematic topics that are portrayed by each woman circulate around their current experiences as a SAHM, and include subjects such as "conflict" and "coping."  In accordance, the narratives additionally provide hopes, dreams, and

anticipated events that the women foresee their families to experience in the future (e.g., "Future Thoughts").

As such, the timelines contained within each narrative are described within the figure threefold: "Pre-SAHMhood" issues, or the determining factors that influenced participants to stay at home to raise their children; "SAHM Experiences," which included issues and experiences the women were undergoing at the time of the interviews; and "Post-SAHM," considerations, in which the women predicted issues that may take place for them and their families in the future.

Interestingly, as the following figure demonstrates, there are thematic overlaps where various themes fit into several generalized subjects.  This concept is illustrated with one of the participants (i.e., RZ), whose narrative contains the "Motherhood" theme, which matches the following generalized subjects: "Family," "SAHM Career," "Conflict," "Coping," and "Opinions."

| Generalized Subject | FL | HP | QT | RZ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Overview;*** Pre-SAHM & SAHM Experiences | Introduction | Introduction | Introduction | Introduction |
| ***Formative Years;*** *Pre-SAHM* | Upbringing, Growing Up, Early Years | Family Influences | Family Life, Personality | Early Influences |
| ***Family;*** *Pre-SAHM & SAHM Experiences* | Upbringing, Growing Up, Early Years, Husband's Role, Work Strain, Strain Reversal, Teacher-to-Mom, SAHM Stress | Pre-Motherhood, Mother-to-be, Hard to Adjust, Adjusting to Motherhood, Family Influences | Personality, Family Life, Novice Mother, Negative Reactions to Motherhood (i.e., NRM), Adjusting to Motherhood, Lifestyle | Early Influences, Husband, Preparations, Motherhood |
| ***Education;*** *Pre-* | Growing Up | Pre-Motherhood | Career | Education, |

| Generalized Subject | FL | HP | QT | RZ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *SAHM & SAHM Experiences* | | | Development | Opinions |
| **<u>SAHM Career;</u>** *Pre-SAHM & SAHM Experiences* | Early Years, Teaching, Temporary Transitions, FLs Work Theory, Work Strain, Teacher-to-Mom | Pre-Motherhood | Career Development, Novice Mother | Education, Personality, Motherhood |
| **<u>Personality;</u>** *Pre-SAHM & SAHM Experiences* | Teacher-to-Mom, Daily Regime, SAHM Stress | Family Influences | Personality, Adjusting to Motherhood | Early Influences, Religion, Personality, Husband |
| **<u>Identity;</u>** *Pre-SAHM & SAHM Experiences* | Early Years, Into A Mom | Mother-to-be | Personality, Adjusting to Motherhood | Religion, Husband |
| **<u>Influences;</u>** *Pre-SAHM & SAHM Experiences* | Growing Up, Influences, FLs Work Theory, Work Strain, Strain Reversal | Mother-to-be, Family Influences, Social Influences | Career Development, Personality, Family Life, Adjusting to Motherhood | Early Influences, Religion, Preparations |
| **<u>Conflict;</u>** *Pre-SAHM & SAHM Experiences* | Teaching, Temporary Transitions, Into A Mom, Work Strain, Teacher-to-Mom, SAHM Stress | Pre-Motherhood, Mother-to-be, Hard to Adjust, Work Life Vs. Home Life | Career Development, NRM, Lifestyle, Viewpoints | Opinions, Motherhood |
| **<u>Coping;</u>** *Pre-SAHM, SAHM Experience & Post-SAHM* | Temporary Transitions, FLs Work Theory, Strain Reversal, Teacher-to-Mom, Daily Regime | Pre-Motherhood, Hard to Adjust, Adjusting to Motherhood, Family Influences, Looking Toward the Future | Career Development, Personality, Novice Mother, Adjusting to Motherhood, Lifestyle | Religion, Husband, Preparations, Motherhood |
| **<u>Opinions;</u>** *Pre-SAHM, SAHM Experience & Post-SAHM* | Influences, FLs Work Theory, Individual Choice | Social Influences, Other Mothers, Work Life Vs. Home Life | NRM, Opposing Viewpoints | Education, Opinions, Motherhood |

| Generalized Subject | FL | HP | QT | RZ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Transitions;*** *Pre-SAHM & SAHM Experience* | Teaching,Temporary Transitions, FLs Work Theory, Teacher-to-Mom | Pre-Motherhood, Mother-to-be, Hard to Adjust, Adjusting to Motherhood | Career Development, Novice Mother, NRM, Adjusting to Motherhood, Lifestyle | Early Influences, Religion, Education |
| ***Future Thoughts;*** *SAHM Experience & Post-SAHM* | FLs Work Theory | Adjusting to Motherhood, Looking Toward the Future | Future Thoughts | Education, Preparations |

**Figure 2 Thematic Overview**

*FL Narrative*

*Introduction*

The following case study portrays the SAHM (i.e., stay-at-home mother[ing]) experience

of a 31-year old woman who will be referred to as "FL."  FL has been fortunate to experience

and understand the responsibilities and demands of both "working mother" and "SAHM" roles.

She has two sons, aged six and three, and at the end of each pregnancy, immersed herself back

into her longstanding teaching profession.  During the 2001-2002 school year, when her sons

were five and two years of age, FL realized that her demands were too great, and made the

decision to relinquish her professional identity to stay with her children.  This narrative captures

FL's recent transition into SAHM status, and offers piercing and fresh insight into such a drastic

role shift, particularly since she derived so much joy from her teaching career.  In this narrative,

FL offers a succinct journey through her life, recounting her childhood, describing spousal issues

that have taken place with her husband, SL, as well as discussing significant variables that have

influenced her life's course.

*Upbringing*

FL benefited from the unique parental situation that occurred within her family. Not only did she grow up with a SAHM, but her father was an insurance agent whose office was located within the confines of their household. FL discusses what it was like having both parents present during daytime hours. She felt a sense of security knowing that somebody would always be available should an emergency or outstanding circumstance arise (e.g., if she left school supplies at home, if she was ill, etc.). As a child and adolescent, FL knew that parental contact was readily accessible, without the fear of disrupting her parent's work engagements such as meetings or out of town business affairs. Her parents were always physically within reach, and this brought a sense of comfort and stability to her childhood.

Although SAHMs were customary during her formative years, as the time period (i.e., 1970's-1980's) and locale (i.e., a rural, northeastern town) may suggest, FL's experience of having a work-at-home-dad (i.e., WAHD) was quite rare. The community in which FL was raised held common values regarding childrearing practices in that daycare assistance and the "latchkey" phenomenon were unusual. Presently as a mother, FL feels these instilled values are being extended toward her own children.

In reviewing the specific role her mother maintained within the family unit, FL believes that her mother's main objective was to be supportive to the needs of the family. As such, she fulfilled all the stereotypical "motherly" duties, as well as contributed to her husband's business demands (e.g., light administrative tasks). Although all of her children are currently grown and out of her household, FL's mother has yet to become employed outside of the household domain. Such domesticity still offers a sense of comfort to FL, as she has utilized her mother's assistance, now in the role of dutiful grandmother (e.g., provides babysitting, etc.), during times of need.

FL's WAHD held an office within their household, which enabled a sense of timeliness to family dinner plans, and allowed his accessibility in case a dire situation arose.  On typical days, however, he maintained a certain amount of "professional" distance, as his office was closed off to the family, and his children knew not to bother him during office hours. Additionally, her dad's business required the arrival of customers throughout each workday, which meant that he always needed to look presentable and professional.

*Growing Up*

FL comes from a family of six kids, three of whom are female.  Although FL has evolved into a SAHM, initially she did make the decision to go back to work, as did her two sisters.  This is a significant facet, particularly since FL's mother stayed at home to raise her children in an environment that favored such a practice.  Although her two sisters have their unique reasons for returning to the workforce (i.e., main source of income, single parent status), FL reports that as a trio, they all share a common love for their occupations.  It would be faulty to disregard the strong influence FL's mother must have had upon her daughters, given her own upbringing:

"…I just remember my mother always saying, she wanted us to be able to be independent as women, and not have to rely on a man, you know, so to speak.  Not that she, I don't think she ever felt that way, because my mother's a fairly independent thinker.  I think it was more—the reason she felt so strongly about that—was looking at her own situation growing up, where, which was a totally different era of, [sic] her mother just literally, being barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen all the time, if you know what I mean.  I mean my mother was one of 14 children, so it was—I think she saw her mother as, as a good person but as someone who was kind of stuck where she was and it's not to say, you know, I'm sure my grandmother may have been very happy about that, I didn't know her very well, but I think my mother wasn't happy to see my grandmother in that situation, so [sic], and my mother never had the opportunity to go to college being one of 14 children.  My grandmother's view was that boys go to college and not girls.  So I think that also played a role in my mothers just feeling strongly…"

FL felt that both her mother and father encouraged all of their children to attend college, but not in an abrasive or forceful manner; rather, they spoke of university life as if it were the next progressional milestone succeeding high school using such semantics as "when in

college…" as opposed to "if you attend college…".  Although all six of the children went to college, FL feels that her parents would not have minded if any of them decided against collegial life, although her mother was invested in promoting the girls' academic levels in order to encourage a sense of independence.

FL attended a four-year university that was half an hour away from home in proximity; she felt this distance was far enough to endorse her autonomous growth, but close enough that she could benefit from the solid bond she had established with her parents, which she attributes to her birth placement (i.e., youngest child).  The college that she chose was an ideal match to those of her career aspirations in that it specialized in the training and advancement of educational leaders and provided experiential practice (e.g., internships, classroom observations) from the inception of her education program.

*Early Years*

At the offset of college, FL was hired to teach in an inner city school located within her home state.  During this period, FL inadvertently met her husband, as he was living in a southern state at the time.  SL was meeting a friend at the midway point between his Midwestern hometown and his place of residence; this meeting area also happened to be the same city where FL was teaching.  During the courtship period, discussions to progress their relationship to the next level began, and wedding plans evolved.  Because they both lived in separate states, they decided that the southern state SL was residing should be their point of destination, as FL had heard that two prominent counties there were hiring more rapidly than that of the counties in her community.  This worked in alignment with the teaching licensures she held, as upon graduating she had taken the nationwide teacher's certification exam in order to ensure marketability.  Additionally, FL and her future husband decided that teaching was a career that could be

transferred to many locations, whereas they believed SL's career in civil engineering was harder to relocate.

FL and her husband briefly had a conversation about family plans and childrearing practice prior to getting married.  Both she and her husband were raised with SAHMs and believed that such a value had been imprinted upon them as a significant standard.  While such future plans were still in the conceptual stages, she and her husband hoped that they would financially be able to afford FL staying home with the children, particularly during the latent and adolescent years.  FL realized that when she would eventually return to work (i.e., before becoming a SAHM), her teaching job would provide similar schedules, vacation and holiday time to that of her children's schedules.  This realization was made in aftermath, not as a factor to which she chose her career path, as it had been her lifelong dream to teach.

*Teaching*

Despite her anticipation of finding a job upon moving, FL was initially unable to find a teaching position and had to settle for temporary work as an administrative assistant.  Outside of her element (i.e., surrounded by children), FL found the job to be quite unfulfilling which resulted in feelings of distress.  This was evident even though the actual job requirements were simplistic and familiar to her, as she had utilized such tasks growing up, when she would help with her father's business, and again during college when she was employed in an office environment.  To exacerbate matters, FL did not have children at the time, so the joy she derived from youngsters was not attained.  Regardless of salary and location concerns, FL desired to reemerge herself into the field of teaching.  She longed to work with children, although she humorously described her coworkers at that time as childish and immature.  FL missed the rewards she reaped at the inner city school in her home state, in which she felt she was making a

difference in the lives of her students, which she found to be very gratifying and meaningful.

Despite her small town upbringing, FL felt if she could have made a difference in at least one

child's life, the challenges that came with working in the inner city would be worthwhile.

During her brief stint as an administrative assistant, FL yearned to be with elementary-

aged schoolchildren.  She found it particularly appealing to work with the younger age groups, as

she felt a direct contribution was being made to the instillation of their value structures, whereas

teachers who assisted preadolescent and adolescent students had less of an impact, as such values

had already been defined.  Her devotion to young children was evident to others, particularly

when she returned to the school system, as her husband commented on her changed personality

during each timeframe.  The love she derived from such a process (e.g., instilling values in

children) was a critical factor in her indecisive wavering to become a SAHM initially, which

contributed to her return to the workforce after becoming a mother.

Finally, FL returned to the field of teaching, and became employed as a first-grade math

teacher, in which she stayed for seven years.  She felt like this was her home, and the students

were like a second family next to her husband and the children she eventually bore.  From a

Lewinian perspective, FL was undergoing an "approach-approach" conflict, in that she was

attracted to two equally desirable goals (i.e., the SAHM value, and her valued teaching position).

To address the latter, she felt her student's viewpoints were refreshing, their vivacity stimulating,

and their attentiveness to her instruction flattering.  Despite dissension and negativity that she

may have encountered during her morning routine with her own children, her mood would

indisputably ascend during the course of her workday:

"And they're just so, as I said before, so innocent and so, [sic], just the-the smallest things make
them happy.  So you could, there were mornings when I would go in and maybe had a rough
morning getting my own kids to daycare and school, or you know, had a hard time convincing
them to get dressed, or you know just anything like that, but when I'd go in almost immediately I

could make that shift from my own family to-to them…I mean I really thought of them as my family. I took the responsibility of teaching them very seriously and, and [sic]. But they almost always had, just some insight that would make you either laugh or just, you know, think, wow, how can, you know, children see such amazing things, I mean they would be amazed or want you to look at, their, you know brand new pink tights or their new barrettes and I mean, how can you not respond to that, I don't know. It's just. And they were always so full of energy to start their day and they just always loved to soak up the things that, you know, I had to say. I mean, it really is kind of an ego boost because they just love to listen to you most of the time and love to hear what you have to say and they're fascinated that you know some of these things that you know that your…and that you're sharing them with them, and –and they can't wait to go home and tell their parents, and so, it really is an, an ego boost, I think. And like I said, even if you're having a, a bad day, just being around them, there was almost always, if, if I were having a bad day I was almost always feeling better. Because at least one student would come up and say something that would either put whatever was wrong with me in perspective, or just make me forget about it for a while, or something like that."

Moreover, FL thoroughly treasured the private school environment in which she was employed. FL had tremendous regard toward the school director, whom she attributed with maintaining a friendly and noncompetitive work atmosphere, in which fellow teachers lent advice, materials or helpful suggestions to each other when needed. Each individual classroom held both a teacher and an assistant, which helped provide constant adult stimulation, and encouraged creative ideas to flow, as well as provided students with different adult perspectives.

*Temporary transitions*

As the school years would come to a close, bringing the arrival of summer break, FL would arrange vacations to her hometown as well as that of her husband's, so that family trips could take place. Before the arrival of each subsequent school year, FL would make periodic visits to her classroom and prepare for her upcoming set of students. Transitioning from school to summer wasn't difficult because FL knew that the break would be short lived, there would be much to do, and she would eventually reemerge into the classroom. She always, anticipated the fresh start of each school year—meeting her new students, and implementing new teaching strategies. Although transitioning back into the classroom was a joy, she did not enjoy her

morning routines, which consisted of preparing herself and her two children for their upcoming

daily regime.

Maternity leave, on the other hand was a harder transition for FL.  From January- April,

1999 she took her leave of absence to care for her newborn and three-year-old sons.  During that

time, FL had to extend her caregiving role further than anticipated, as her entire family became

gravely ill.  Her husband and two children suffered from maladies that required extensive

nurturing, which was emotionally draining and time consuming.  Not to mention her newly

defined role, in which she was a SAHM for three whole months to two children (and periodically

a sickly husband), a role that was both unfamiliar and unpleasant.  Because of this, FL returned

to work in April, surprising her school director who believed she would naturally take the

remaining school year to be with her newly evolving family.  FL felt she needed to return to the

world in which she was both familiarized with and constantly rewarded.

*Into A Mom*

Whereas FL began conceptualizing herself as a teacher during her formative years, she

didn't begin thinking about herself as a mother until she was in college.  She envisioned herself

meeting her future husband during her college years, upon which they would marry soon after

graduation.  FL would naturally become a teacher, fulfilling the job in which she had dreamed

for many years.  Upon giving birth to her first child, she would become a SAHM and continue in

this role until her children were older and enrolled in the school system.  At this time, FL

imagined that she would reenter the teaching profession, which would mesh nicely with the

schedule of her future children.  She referenced her aunt, who followed this pattern, and whose

life FL found worthy of replication.

When FL did in fact give birth to her children, she acknowledged the realities that followed with this enormous transition.  Time seemed to pass at such a rapid pace, as the baby was so needy and demanding.  Yet at the same time, it was an incredibly joyous period, and FL felt compelled to interact more with mothers of small infants, as well as to intermingle with people in general, as to display the baby to the world.  FL noticed that her perception toward newsworthy events was finely tuned to infant-related issues, as she paid careful attention to media related issues (e.g., car seat stories) as well as written documents that she would have otherwise disregarded.  Most noteworthy, FL felt that becoming a mother enhanced her teaching skills, as she was better equipped to empathize and relate to parental concerns that would present themselves in, and outside of the classroom.

*Husband's Role*

Despite her distinctive experience with having a WAHD, FL did not feel that this would be a suitable position for her husband to assume.  Initially,  she described his occupation, a civil engineer, as incompatible to the confines of a homebound locale due to space demands necessary to hold sizeable blueprint plans (a tidbit which she subsequently modified, as the advent of computer systems reverse such space requirements), along with the collaboration among coworkers that define his workday.  This finally led to the realization revolving around her family's conventional role identities: her husband lacked the innate, maternal patience that is fundamental for the parent who stays at home:

"…he would come home and if one of the kids was sick or just not happy, he would say 'I don't know how you do it, I don't know how you…' and my husband's a very patient man, so it surprised me kind of for him to say that, but in a way I'm glad he knows his limitations too, that he could say that he just doesn't think he could have the patience, because when I was working, there were times when, we really tried to trade off if the kids were sick, I would take a day off and the next time somebody was sick he would try to take a day off so he would try to get some work done from home, and he would say 'I just, I can't do it, I don't know how you do it," he would say 'I'd just sit down to start something, and somebody would need something," or, you

know, and so he, in that sense he tried it, but I just think for him it just wouldn't have been as easy, where for me it was something that I, I wanted to do…"

FL also feels that her husband had a conventional relationship with their children in that he enjoys evening and recreational times with them, as opposed to the tedious minutiae that defines many SAHMs experiences.  She surmised that he would miss daily adult interactions, and that stay-at-home fathers may not network appropriately into an already established SAHM circle, as would their wives.

*Influences*

FL contemplates the divisive debate surrounding which phenomena define the developmental characteristics found in human beings: nature (e.g., biological concerns) or nurture (e.g., caregiving, environment).  She feels that women are inherently more nurturing than men, evidenced in their care for their own, as well as unfamiliar needy children.  Of course, there are always exceptions to this rule, as indicated by her father's affection and compassion toward children.  More substantial is the corresponding societal expectations (e.g., nurture) toward which families adhere.  Not only do such macrocosmic norms dictate which gender should stay home to raise the children, and which should be the primary wage earner (which is accurate in FL's household, in that SL earned the higher salary), but during her upbringing, FL's microcosm (e.g., family, community) paralleled such tenets.  Compounding this theory is the fact that SL's brother was a stay-at-home dad who was miserable and missed both the commute and the adult exchanges that workplaces provide.  FL feels that her husband would react in a similar fashion.

When asked about media influences which may have contributed toward her decision and experience as a SAHM, FL did not feel like there were any.  Just the opposite, when she was working and saw high profiled celebrities who were managing both their careers and their families in an eloquent manner, she would question her lack of strength and equilibrium between

professional and familial domains.  Where upon her husband would gently remind her of the

luxuries such icons could afford (e.g., nannies, travel expenses), and thus snap FL back to a

guilt-free reality.

Correspondingly, FL does not feel that religion factored into her ultimate SAHM course.

She attended Catholic schools from kindergarten through grade 12, and her husband attended a

Catholic elementary school.  Both of them had positive experiences, but until recently, they

thought that public schools would suffice for their two sons.  A recent controversy surrounding

eliminating the term "God" from the pledge of allegiance is one example which has swayed FL

to send her children to an educational institute that promotes both academic and spiritual growth.

FL talked freely about religious issues before abruptly changing the topic, which seemed to

provide an awkward transition, indicating her sudden discomfort toward this otherwise personal

subject matter:

"…I wouldn't consider us, you know, super religious, but we do go to church and we do pray
and we do practice religion.  [sic].  But I never really frankly thought about it as a connection, I.
*(At this point, FL begins the awkward transition into another subject*

FL'S Work Theory

Initially when FL became a mother to her firstborn child, she did not feel the strenuous

effort involved with the management of her working and mothering realms.  In fact, because of

her ideal school schedule (e.g., hours, summer vacations), it seemed to allow quality time with

her newborn son.  Although she felt a brief twinge of regret toward returning to the workforce

post-delivery, she and her husband needed the paycheck, as they had many financial obligations

to undertake.  Additionally, FL was able to do some research both formally, by reading articles

and informally, by means of observing working women within her family who were raising

emotionally healthy children.  FL frequently refers to a theory (i.e., "FL's work theory") that

describes children in need of SAHMs as they age. This theory seems to oppose standard

attachment theories, as well as mainstream attitudes held by the layperson, which perhaps was a

coping strategy utilized to combat feelings of guilt:

"…it just seemed that when the kids got older was when they really needed their parents the
most, I mean when you're infants obviously you need that care of feeding and changing but it
just seems like as the kids get older they're also more aware of you being there or not being there
whereas it may not be as much when they are infants. So that's kind of when we thought, well,
you know, as long as it's not conflicting with the way I feel, you know, about ah dividing my
time, I always felt like I was able to still give them quality time but at that age it's mostly play
time. Now they're into more, now that they're getting older they want to do more after school
activities and weekend activities and I really think more of the time is needed now and so we
kind of just, we're guessing that that would be the time that would be for me to stay home as
when they got older but it turned out to be accurate, I think.

It made sense for FL to return to teaching, as she utilized the above theoretical premise to

dictate her behavioral choices. Also, SL offered genuine support toward any decision she should

render, combined with the fact that she loved her job and that she had found a high quality

daycare center to tend to her child's needs.

*Work Strain*

Although FL sought temporary solace from the increased demands in her workplace, she

eventually began to feel the strain from the duality of combining family and professional life.

This was particularly evident once her second child was born, and her eldest child entered

school, as evening time was split between his homework and her school preparations. She began

contemplating staying home in November, 2001 and came to the conclusive decision in

February, 2002 that her new role would be that of a SAHM. During this timeframe, many

negative factors circulating around her dual status began to arise. One such factor included the

increased energy she exerted into her morning routine. She offers a dubious rationale behind the

work demands that disenabled her husband to assist her with the morning routine. Such "work

demands" (e.g., meetings) did not allow him to help get the children ready, drop them off at

school in the mornings, or pick them up in the evenings.  These responsibilities, in addition to getting herself ready, were placed exclusively upon FL.

This arduous routine was tolerable for the first few years when there were only two stops to be made; in the beginning years both of her sons went to the same daycare center which was the first stop, and FL's arrival at work constituted the second stop.  With time, her oldest son attended preschool at the same locale in which FL was employed, and the daily routine still consisted of two stops.  It wasn't until the year of 2001-2002, when her eldest son attended a separate Kindergarten, thus requiring her to make three distinct morning stops, that her stress levels increased.  At the end of her work day, she would depart at the exact moment the teachers were permitted to leave, rather than stay late and catch up on paperwork (e.g., lesson plans, grading papers, etc.).  Her reasoning was to spend "quality" and "quantity" time with her children, and complete the paperwork after they had retired for the evening.  With time, her schedule was wearing thin and she was becoming exhausted, which consequently affected the amount of energy she was able to provide her schoolwork:

Furthermore, FL's eldest son attended an after school program, which added to the cost of tuition FL and her husband paid for him to attend private school.  As FL submitted each month's payment, she was constantly reminded that such an expense was not necessary, and reinforced the concept she had been grappling with, to become a SAHM, particularly since their financial standing could thrive solely upon her husband's income.

*Strain Reversal*

Based on the built up strain that FL was encountering, she became more aware of parental volunteers that were present at her son's school.  Such parents would come and help out in a specialized area (e.g., cafeteria, library, etc.) in order to spend time with their children and

simultaneously help out with the greater good of the school. This thought became very

appealing to FL, who wanted to maintain a sense of connectedness with children, while

concentrating most of her energies toward her own offspring. Also, becoming a parent volunteer

meant partaking in such fun and meaningful interactions without the vexation of completing

rigorous and time consuming paperwork.

Because of her desires, FL began longing to join the ranks of this exclusive group of

parent volunteers:

"…And then I finally met this one mother who said that she knew all these other mothers
because they all volunteered together. And so that was kind of another thing that did help my
decision a little bit. I was thinking 'I want to be part of that group.' I love my teacher friends,
but I want a bigger part of me to be in my son's school than where I work."

FL's husband suggested that she might be happy working at her son's school, in order to

derive the benefits she obtained from teaching, while still spending daytime hours with her son.

However, she was adamant that she would find enjoyment focusing primarily on her son, versus

worrying about a classroom full of students and their corresponding paperwork. Her

premonition has reportedly become a reality:

"…My younger son and I went and helped in the lunchroom the other day and I said to my
husband, 'oh this is just great,' I loved it. Some parents looked at me and said 'oh, you're
helping in the lunchroom, God!' (laughs). But I loved it because I just loved being around the
kids again…just doing something simple like that made me feel much better and gave me, you
know, something to look forward to, [sic]. And a way to help out with the kids and help out with
school, and I got to see my son at lunch and he got to eat lunch with his brother, and so, you
know it worked out great."

When approached by FL, her school director was very encouraging and understanding

about her dilemma; as a former SAHM herself, she understood the demands and sacrifices that

such mothers make, and shared her own personal history with FL, while leaving the door of

opportunity open if FL ever changed her mind. This amenable departure, in conjunction with

FL's theory that older children demanded more maternal supervision and involvement than did

infants (i.e., FL's work theory) "sealed the deal." Indeed, around this timeframe, FL's son began to question why she was not among the parental volunteers to frequent his school, thus confirming her work theory while validating her upcoming role.

FL is confident that her decision to spend time with family is paramount. She feels that her profession is one whose theories and strategies remain relatively constant and thus, reentry into the field will be a smooth process. To account for contemporary and theoretical teaching advancements that continue to develop, FL plans on taking classes at a local university to maintain her certification credentials.

*Teacher-to-Mom*

FL feels that her teaching experience has helped develop the necessary skills that have transformed her into a competent and caring mother. Her teaching background has helped her measure her children's academic progress with insight and efficiency, whereas other parents may not accurately acknowledge the academic strengths and areas of improvement evident in their children's work. A critical skill that has transcended from her former years of teaching to that of motherhood revolves around patience. When she feels impatient with her children, she visualizes that they are her students, which enables her to interact with patience; also, this technique allows her to teach her children in a thorough manner:

"It would be hard, but I would really try to be patient with the kids, and even though it was hard for me to be more patient with them and try to remember that they had, especially my older son, he had a long day at school too. That kind of thing. And, [sic], trying to remember when they're having a frustration of learning a new skill, say for example, you know, how would I deal with a student at school? How would I talk with them? Versus I think as parent sometimes you're not as patient with your own children as you are with students per se. And so I think in some ways that has helped me, because I do try to almost view my son as one of my students. How would I, would I just yell at him, you know "Just tie your shoes and hurry up," or would I, you know, really try to, what steps would I take if he were my student to try to help him learn, [sic] that skill…But I think the, I would say the way it's helped me the most is to keep in perspective that, you know, if he were one of my students, would I, how would I approach the situation?"

Her current lifestyle is much more leisurely, especially compared to that of a working mother. Particularly hard was the latter portion of her "working-mom era," in which the children were getting older and had extracurricular activities to attend at the end of their school hours. FL described the frantic physical routine that would take place after school (e.g., driving to and from events, cooking/eating, bathing, and bedtime), as well as the mental and emotional strains such days would cause. In contrast, she now feels that she can prepare for upcoming events, which gives her more time for after school activities. She also feels she can provide interactions with family members that are patient and serene.

Another reality, with less enthusiasm, that FL has had to confront in her newly acquired SAHM status is disconnecting herself from negativity that may arise within her family unit. When such moments arose while she was teaching, she benefited greatly from the diversion and joyous interactions that accompanied her teaching activities. As a SAHM, FL listed several times (e.g., exercising at the gym, during her children's nap/school/play/bedtime) during which she could regain her thoughts and enjoy a moment of solitude, in order to separate from family members during problematic occasions. However, there is a hint of nostalgia toward her previous role as a working mother, and the corresponding and highly desired sense of detachment that it had provided:

"…I think I'm just finding new ways to have that separation, if you will, from the things that are frustrating, or the, the time to myself, whereas at school I think I—I know I felt that way because I, I could literally forget about because I was so engrossed in what I was doing there, and I, and I think [sic], as I said, I just used those little bits of time throughout the day that I can to, kind of, to take myself from those kinds of things."

*Daily Regime*

FL describes the daily routine of a SAHM, including elements that reflect those to which a working woman would employ. Previous to her SAHM status, friends warned that her

upcoming lifestyle would be so hectic, she wouldn't even have time to take a morning shower, and instead have to wait until 3:00 p.m. to care for her own hygienic needs.  FL disagrees with their prediction, indicating that showering is a very important part of her morning regime, which helps her energize and get ready to start the day; if necessary, she will awaken at 5 a.m., as to shower without disrupting her husband's morning schedule.  Likewise, she gets dressed each morning in her daytime apparel as opposed to lounging around in her pajamas.  She attributes this habit as a partial result from her childhood, when her father would entertain clientele, thus requiring the members of her household to appear presentable; and partially this habit reflects her personal need.  Quite possibly, this may also parallel the ritualistic morning routine remnant from her employment era.

The application of facial products (i.e., makeup) is similarly an important part of FL's current daily routine, both during weekday and weekend mornings.  She comments that she never wants to be seen as one of "those women" who let themselves go unattended and appear disheveled.  She claims this is important to her own wellbeing, and it's important that her husband see her in such an orderly fashion, even though he muses at why she would put makeup on during the weekend, particularly if they do not have a planned excursion.

With regard to scheduling her daily events in a concise fashion, FL admits that she does oftentimes have a grand agenda in the back of her mind.  This allows her to embark upon assignments that she was unable to bring to fruition while working (e.g., cleaning out the closet). Although FL is always intuitively aware that such necessities need to be completed, she does not rigidly set her daily schedule around such ventures, and always leaves room for spontaneous activities that may arise, an attribute that she finds comparable to a teacher's flexible nature.

*SAHM Stress*

There are stressors that FL attributes to her newfound SAMH status, one of which is

social isolation.  Whereas in the workforce, FL was immersed in daily interactions among

students, fellow teachers (including the co-teacher stationed in her classroom), and parents, she

now prefers secluding herself to the comfortable confines of her home.  While FL describes her

husband as being the family extrovert, she approaches the world with reticence.  Such timidity

impacts the amount of activities (e.g., playgroups) her children attend, and the violation of her

comfort zone if she does attend such functions.

Spousal appreciation is another source of anxiety that FL has encountered as a SAHM.

FL's husband feels a sense of comfort having her at home to take care of important issues that

may have otherwise affected his work performance, such as taking the children to a doctor's

appointment.  However, FL covered such issues when she was teaching, and therefore they were

never actual threats to SL's job functioning.  Nevertheless, she experiences ambivalence toward

her husband's lack of appreciation regarding her household responsibilities; on the one hand, she

feels necessary to compliment him on the praise he extends toward her, while conveying that he

would like her levels of productivity to increase:

"…is just still being appreciated for even for the little things.  I mean, and my husband is very
good at that.  At you know, saying 'gee, you know, I noticed that you vacuumed today,' or
whatever.  Or you know.  'Dinner's really good today,' or just something like that.  And I think, I
think sometimes people do get in such a habit of things being done, especially the spouse that
isn't working that you forget to compliment them, or notice something maybe that they did, or
maybe something that you take for granted that, that your spouse whose staying home has done.
And, [sic].  I, 'cause he said "now that you're home I'm going to have, you know, I'm going to
make a list for all these things for you to do."  And I'm like (laughs) "no, no you're not…I think
the biggest stresses are just, for me just not being in the house too much, and just remembering
that, that everything I'm doing, even though they seem like menial tasks, are important to the
family."

Additionally, FL feels that there is a lack of appreciation toward SAHMs from a larger,

societal perspective, which she has been told is prevalent in smaller, rural areas along with larger

metropolitan cities and suburbs. Although FL has yet to experience this phenomenon, many

SAHMs have warned her about such discriminatory behaviors, evidenced at social functions in

which introductions and conversations exclude a sense of value, or even a series of questions

toward the nature of the SAHMs work, as compared to her working counterparts. Interestingly,

while employed, FL claims to have expressed similar judgments toward SAHMs, in that they

didn't "work," yet they didn't seem to get much accomplished. It wasn't until she became a

SAHM that she was able to extend acknowledgment to the job responsibilities that she once

scoffed.

A message that FL would like to extend to society that might help reverse the devastating

misunderstandings involved with SAHMs importance, is for the community at large to involve

themselves with children. This can be done in volunteer format, ranging from helping out in

sporting leagues or school settings, which would demonstrate to the volunteer(s) the tremendous

amount of responsibilities that accompany the supervision and care of youngsters. While FL

believes that multitasking is evident in most career fields, she believes that people cannot

conceive the amount involved in the SAHMs role:

"…getting involved before you start saying you know, that it's not, you know, it's not that
difficult, 'why can't you get this done or why can't you get that done,' and just remembering, or
you know reminding yourself and helping to put in perspective what it is actually like to deal
with a group, a small group even of young children, who at any moment could, you know
anything, it's just anything could happen. You know, and putting yourself in that position where
you know, one's crying, one's sick, the phone's ringing, you know, someone's knocking at the
door, you're trying to cook dinner and dinner's burning, I mean there's just that, that
multitasking, which I know we all do, but it's different when it's people and not just papers or
projects. Or you know, if a child is crying and they want immediate attention. And if another
one is sick, then they need your immediate attention, and how you divide that…"

FL also believes that the working spouse should heed her advice, and help out at home

periodically, to provide the SAHM an ability to cultivate her own needs. Indeed, when FL

employs this policy at home, her husband becomes ingratiated and fully recognizes her daily

struggles.  Hence, this strategy is twofold: it bestows upon the SAHM a "break," as well as ensuring her receipt of due recognition.  Former SAHMs, such as her own mother, could also utilize such a "refresher" course to be reminded of the laborious past that may have elapsed their memories.

FL has spent most of her adult years catering to the needs of children, and in comparing her personal and professional involvement she feels that it is easier to extend affection to her own brood, although her corresponding parental expectations make raising them more demanding.  Since most women are more emotionally invested toward the success of their own offspring, they also take their children's disappointments to heart, which can be intense and draining.

*Individual Choice*

FL explains the sincere advice she would offer a pregnant woman who was grappling with the decision to return to work or become a SAHM.  Primarily, she would assess the amount of gratification the woman's paid work provides.  FL believes that high levels of paid work satisfaction enables a mother to leave her children in the care of a daycare provider, and intuitively leads this mother to the right decision (e.g., work).  She feels there are certain equations that this hypothetical woman could follow: if she were financially sound and unhappy at her job, she would advise the woman to become a SAHM; if she loved her job and/or was invested in career advancement, regardless of her financial situation, FL would suggest the woman work on a part-time basis, or consider flextime.

In order to advise women on which role would suit their needs, FL feels it is of utmost importance to tap into what would make them happy.  If FL had become a SAHM prematurely, she would have been unhappy, and such a sentiment would indirectly filter down to her children.

Similarly, women who reluctantly reenter the workforce post-delivery will set a negative tone for the entire family.

FL believes that women should directly experience their counterpart's role: working mother's should stay home for an extended period during some point in their child's formative years, and SAHMs should tap into the minds of working mothers to understand the reasoning behind their decision to work (e.g., single mother status, financial issues, love of their profession, etc.). FL resents media (e.g., articles, news programs) that facilitate disregard toward either side (e.g., working or SAHM). She feels that she can empathize with both roles, especially since the realization of her family's importance did not foster until her children had aged. FL attributes this later realization to a combination of factors, including her inability to tangibly experience motherhood during pregnancy, as she could not see, hear or interact with the baby in utero. Undoubtedly, this realization combines itself with her prevailing theory (i.e., "FL's work theory") that young infants are less needy of maternal support and attention.

*HP Narrative*

*Introduction*

This case study examines the life of a 33-year-old SAHM (i.e., stay-at-home mother) who will be referred to as "HP." HP is in the process of raising Jasmine, a ten month old infant, who will soon be joined by a sibling, as HP was two months pregnant at the time of the interview. HP outlines her excursion into SAHMhood, which she had transitioned into after a series of jobs that once defined her career identity. The influential sources (i.e., familial, social) which helped dictate her position, and the opinions she holds regarding mothers in both realms (i.e., working, staying home) provide an assessment of her adaptation levels, and examine what she feels is in store for her future. She describes the home she shares with husband "DP," who has a high-

profiled position as a financial controller in a government contracting corporation, in which he helps administer the details accentuating U.S. military equipment.

*Pre-motherhood*

HP attended a small state school located in the Northeastern region of the United States. Her preliminary major was education, but she eventually transferred to the field of communications, as she found its broad application to the job market appealing.  Upon college graduation, HP undertook her first professional experience as an unpaid volunteer at a local hospital.  She was stationed in their communications division for five months before an offer for a paid position within the same department was extended, in which she accepted and stayed for three years.  The job required that she hone her public relations and desktop publishing skills, of which she was already quite fond.  Her job entailed writing publications to convey noteworthy incidences that either took place directly within the hospital, or which had some indirect affiliation.  She also had to oversee the media involvement (e.g., a child falling in a well), whose interest in covering controversially immense "headlining" stories had to be managed.  Due to her volunteer status, HP was not assigned the exclusive handling of heavier topics.  In this way, she was exposed an exciting array of events, and learned to process events from different media angles (i.e., photography, television, newspaper).

While working at the hospital, HP's personal life began to flourish, and plans to marry her beau (i.e., DP) were underway. However, the couple lived in different states, and such separation ultimately resulted in HP's decision to relocatedown south where DP resided. Although in many senses she was uprooting her life, she intended to maintain the career path she was in the process of establishing; desktop publishing had greatly influenced her, which led to a subsequent job search similar in nature to that of which she was familiar.  She attained a position

as graphic designer in her new hometown, in which she was employed for a year and a half.

Unfortunately, HP felt restless and unproductive throughout this time; she felt there were not

enough assignments to occupy her workday, aside from pictorially bringing life to the paperwork

(e.g., brochures, pamphlets) her colleagues would sketch.  Although the company went out of

business and required her to resign, HP would have left regardless and look for something more

fulfilling.

The next corporation HP became employed with was a large aeronautical company

located in the large metropolis that neighbored her community.  HP loved making her daily

commute into the city; she was captivated by its sights and sounds, and experiencing them

regularly made her feel like she had successfully graduated into the world of adulthood.  Initially

she worked in desktop publishing, an assignment to which she willingly exerted excessive time

and energy.  Eventually she transferred to the graphic design unit, an upgraded position with

increased demands.  HP describes the many highs (e.g., exciting work tasks, working in the city,

structured environment that suits her personality) and lows (e.g., grueling hours) which defined

the job she recalls as her favorite:

"…You routinely work until 2 in the morning, you work weekends.  Like you have to come in
the next day and I remember that day I worked the 28 hours, I had to ask to leave… 'so are you
done with me yet?' And the one guy was like… 'well I guess you can go.'  By that time you are
just like…that had followed like a bunch of days of working until 2, 3, or 4 in the morning and
you come back at 10:00 am…that's all the way downtown and from here, the commute was a
hour a half each way.  So I had a really long commute on top of long hours…Yes, we moved to
this house when I got that job, so somewhere around there and that's a job I really
enjoyed…benefits were great, the work atmosphere was great, you got your own office,
everything was very professional, but it would be just long hours which was killing me and the
long commute…I actually got a promotion right before I left, but I just…"… "they were really
super sticklers about everything…every period, every space, you really and you go through this
book check at the end of the process and every body is going page by page looking…they are
really…precise….you have to be very attentive….something about you could be disqualified or
whatever if something's are not exactly…if there is a page missing or something like it's really
tight, so you have to be just perfect…" "Yeah.  It was a really excellent department, they really
did their job, everyone did their job really well; worked together well…I don't know…it was

great.  I think its part of working downtown…that atmosphere…you go down to the city, there are these sorts of things going on and you just…I don't know, you just feel great being down there and it's kind of addictive.  It's nice.  You feel like a grownup…You feel like you just have it all together.  It was nice, it was hard to leave that job, but they kind of wore you down, it had a really high burnout rate there...it's just the way it was."

In describing a job containing such contrasting extremes, resulting in mental and physical exhaustion, HP admitted that she was compelled to resign and accept a job offer with a small printing company.  Paradoxically, she felt her new, low-stress job was beneath her, as the atmosphere (e.g., coworker's attire) was unprofessional and the technology antiquated.  While working in this new environment for the first time, her intuition immediately informed her that this workplace would never measure up to her former position.  However, upon weighing the comprehensive picture, the "pros" outnumbered the "cons," as all of the areas that lacked suitability in her previous job (e.g., hours, commute) were not present in her new job.

HP describes an interesting occurrence that took place during this timeframe.  In her personal life, she and DP had been trying for two years to become pregnant, and while employed in her new lackluster position, their attempts eventually came to fruition.  Before this occurred, she and her husband had relinquished their hope after putting forth great effort to conceive, and HP decided to funnel all of her energies toward career advancement.  In an apparent contradiction to that decision, she downgraded her position from one in which she believed she could thrive to a lower position.  Perhaps she was subconsciously preparing for motherhood, as she chose a job having traits (e.g., close to home) that would be conducive to motherhood.  HP also operated in a manor that eliminated pressure from her life.  Whereas many women fear confrontation with their "biological clocks," HP tried not to place such stress upon herself.  This cautious strategy eventually worked, and after two years of anticipation she became pregnant

with her daughter Jasmine.  However, due to miscarrying several previous pregnancies, HP and her husband did not commemorate this special event until Jasmine's arrival.

*Mother-to-be*

In younger years, when HP conceptualized herself as a mother, she envisioned working until she became pregnant, and upon giving birth staying home to care for her child.  HP had always expressed distaste toward placing children in daycare centers, and she still finds the thought of leaving her child in the custody of strangers unappealing.  She and DP share this ideal, and they had financially prepared themselves by living exclusively on DP's salary, as they chose a home and a lifestyle that would be covered by his single earnings.

At the time of the interview, Jasmine is 10-months-old and HP is two months pregnant with her second child.  Her feelings surrounding this otherwise joyous occasion are mixed, and she comprehensively provides a discussion examining the positive and negative aspects to her current station.  HP expresses optimism at perfecting the mothering skills that she blindly stumbled upon with Jasmine; additionally, she is pleased that the two siblings will be so close in age and provide each other with companionship.  Likewise, she is grateful that her second child-to-be was conceived effortlessly, as it had been such a struggle to become pregnant with Jasmine.  The following excerpt illustrates the trepidation she faces, which one might insinuate is based upon her previous experience with Jasmine:

HP: "…It took me about a month to kind of get used to the idea, but we are real excited and I just know that it's going to be a really rough year ahead and I'm just trying to get adjusted to that idea, but I know that a newborn this time around really will be…I'll be much…it will be easier because I know so much more…it'll be so much easier, but just dealing with the 2…we'll see, I don't know…the dead of winter…my husband's busy time at work…his parents are in Florida for the winter and mine will say…if it's not snowing…we'll see you at admitting and I'll be like…"

Interviewer:    "When are you due?"

HP:     End of January.  Not a time I would have picked, but since it took so long to get her, I certainly…we were just really surprised and happy because we thought it was going to be another struggle and it's not, so it's like a nice thing…which is scaring me at the moment, but what are you going to do?  You get through it like I did when she was…you just kind of get through every day…it sounds so terrible, but it's just sunrise to sunset…you just get through the next day…and eventually it's better…"  "I don't know if I'll have as hard a time…I probably will be busy with her, but it's hard to say, so I'm not quite as scared…well I didn't know to be scared the first time and you know, I remember going to a party when she was 4-weeks-old and friends of ours said…we are going to have a baby and the friends had just had the baby and I was like…what are you thinking?  I couldn't…she was just…so deep in that…ugh…I can't even imagine anybody having another baby…why would you do that a second time?  But now I have a different perspective."

Also affecting HP's apprehension toward motherhood includes her newfound identity, as

the quest for an appropriate job title began since filling out her tax return forms.  To aggravate

matters, HP's sister "jokingly" forewarned her that with motherhood, women experience a loss

of memory and intellect, resulting in mindless futility.  Whether or not HP consents to such

advice is uncertain; however, she does apologize throughout the interview regarding the

tangential nature of her responses.

*Hard to Adjust*

HP felt that the transition from work to home was difficult; the former provided

systematic efficiency, while the latter was arbitrarily defined.  She felt there was little being

accomplished, although the definition of her primary role was to keep Jasmine alive.  This task

was to be completed without being given a specific rulebook and with no authoritative supervisor

guiding her way.  This limitless and loosely defined lifestyle was uncomfortable and awkward,

greatly contrasting her preference for ordered continuity, and was more pronounced when her

maternal role models (e.g., mother, mother-in-law) left her side, leaving her angst-ridden and

sad.  HP longed for the structure and daily outline that had once defined her life, in which she

felt a sense of mastery and achievement.  Her newfound and undesired role was analogous to

those of her amateur workdays, in which she lacked competence and expertise that eventually

accumulated over time. After climbing the ladder of success and developing her professional

identity, HP found herself suddenly thrust back into the role of "rookie." She found this new and

unappealing position strenuous, and did not have faith in her abilities:

"Some people really love it…they love a newborn, they think…couldn't wait for them to wake
up…I'm not one of those people and I know plenty of people aren't…they are like oh my gosh.
It's really hard. I mean…just…you are used to…there is no schedule, they just do…they are new
and they do whatever whenever and you have no way of knowing and you are supposed…and
everybody talks about the no sleep thing, but that's the least of the problems really…it's…you
don't know what you are doing, you are stressed out because you don't know what you are doing
and the doctor just tells, well, their gaining weight, that's fine…you got to be kidding me…this
can't be what…I can't be doing this right? Tell me exactly what to do, but that's really hard
just…you are out of your element…it's really scary and you kind of just have to get through each
day. I was just going from sun up to sun down trying to get to sun down…if I get through
enough of these, she'll be a little bit older…probably by the time she hit 4 months, we got a little
better, 6-7 months have been great and now she is 9 and it's really great. I was thinking you
didn't talk to me really early because I wasn't really a happy camper. I was miserable. It was
just so hard. It was really hard."

To make matters worse, Jasmine suffered from reflux, a common infantile disorder

characterized by gastrular troubles, and which oftentimes results in fits of colicky disruption.

Undoubtedly, this caused a tremendous amount of maternal grief, as HP was continually

disrupted by the nonstop crying, as well as distressed at her inability to calm Jasmine's nerves,

which exacerbated her existing feelings of powerlessness. This experience altered HP's

reactions toward other recently appointed mothers who complained about their newborns; those

who were caring for "non-reflux" babies were granted less empathy.

The only set of instructions that HP felt were available included volumes of baby books,

which instruct specific feats the infant should be completing during the course of each

developmental stage (e.g., weekly, monthly.). Yet another source of frustration for HP was that

Jasmine did not seem to be following the rigid checklist of desired behaviors that were outlined

in the books. Even more troubling was the lack of feedback Jasmine seemed to bequeath upon

her mother.  HP felt that for all the hard work entailed in motherhood, she should at least be

rewarded with loving gestures from Jasmine, of which she did not feel she was receiving enough:

"…but things like recognizing and responding to you, it just takes a long time before they even look at you…everything…that's a hard thing too, because you are doing all this work and you are not getting any feedback at all…you are not getting a smile or anything and everyone told me…her smile will all be worth it and at that point she was still so…with the crying…I was just like…five minutes of smiling a day is not making up for the 9 hours of crying…it's just not happening and that's what…I talked to other people who had the reflux babies and they would just say, yeah they cry all day…a couple minutes of smiles doesn't mean anything…it doesn't help…I know…"

"…Then because she was crying so much, I wouldn't have minded being at work for a while…but I think they have it backwards.  I think maternity leave needs to be after the first three months because…they [*the babies*] don't recognize you anyway, you are doing all this work and they don't recognize you…they can cry for someone else."

Some days seemed to be more burdensome than others, and these days were often

categorized by Jasmine's sense of increased dependency levels.  During such times, Jasmine

would display overwhelming neediness, which would consequently drain an emotionally weary

HP.  The particularly unsettling periods included Jasmine's teething phase, the times when she

required her mom to act as playmate, when she seemed unusually whiny, or during days when

HP perceived everything going awry (e.g., feeding).  These calamities seemed to endure

throughout the entire day, broken up temporarily by Jasmine's naptimes, during which HP

sought solace.  When such unpleasantries transpired, HP describes the coping strategies which

are still being utilized:

"When [*husband's name is deleted*] comes home, I say, here you go.  Like in the beginning when she was so hard, he would come home and I would just…I would have to go upstairs in the bedroom and I would just shut the door and that way the crying…she was screaming, he would just deal with her and because being in the same room with the crying…it doesn't work.  You're still totally on edge and you are ready to jump out of your chair.  You got to get completely away…I'd turn on the TV, I'd shut the door and I'd just totally disconnect.  I've had days where I've done that recently…which was just a bad day and I've had enough and he comes home and I say here you go…he plays with her, he's fine because he's fresh and then I'd just go upstairs or I'd go for a walk…I just had to get out or get away and that totally helps and it really gives you…and you have to do it.  You have to."

HP describes spousal assistance as the key ingredient to her coping abilities.  She feels that the working partner, (i.e., DP) who has been out of the household during the day's entirety, typically comes home to find the baby's antics quite endearing, as such rote and repetitious behaviors are being witnessed for the first time.  In her household, such novelties provide DP with a welcomed transition from "working world" to "family time."  Concurrently, while he transitions into family time, HP is awarded with much anticipated seclusion and/or personal activities (e.g., yardwork, shopping).  Such solitude is particularly necessary for HP's wellbeing when DP returns from an extended business trip, allowing her to recharge her energies.

Another difficult transition that HP has adjusted to since her recent SAHM status was the loss of an environment in which she had previously found consolidation after a long day.  This had been the physical confines of her household (i.e., the outer shell).  During her working days, she had found refuge by lounging in the inviting and cozy furniture within her home after a laborious day at the office.  Now, her home essentially is her office, which does not allow her to physically compartmentalize an extreme day at work with a sense of comfortable leisure.  Furthermore, living (and working) in a single-family home requires her to perform extensive manual labor (e.g., painting, cleaning) comparable to her carefree days of living in an apartment complex.

*Adjusting to Motherhood*

HP feels that her acclimation toward motherhood is gradually taking place.  Whereas when Jasmine was a newborn and HP was in constant motion from "sunup until sundown," she now feels a sense of order to her daily regime, to which she partially credits toward the advent of Jasmine's scheduled and uninterrupted bedtimes.  To her satisfaction, HP makes certain that she attends to her morning shower, thus opposing the popular rumor which circulates among new

mothers stating that the act of bathing oneself can fall to the wayside when caring for newborn infants.  In the beginning stages of immobility, before Jasmine was able to curiously explore her new surroundings, HP was able to place her baby in a contraption within the shower unit, enabling her to keep a watchful eye over Jasmine while tending to her own hygienic needs.  Now that she has begun to crawl, HP showers before her husband awakens, which is sometime prior to 6:00 a.m.

From there, a consistently fixed schedule ensues, and includes playtime, naptime, and mealtime.  Additionally, the mother and child duo make it a habit to leave the house each day to run errands or attend social functions.  HP credits Jasmine with inspiring their daily outings, claiming that her daughter gets bored and needs external stimulation.  It is likely that HP is projecting her own desire to publicly circulate upon her infant daughter's unsuspecting shoulders.  DP arrives home at 6:30 p.m. and enjoys an hour and a half with his daughter, as they eat dinner and partake in prototypical father-child interactions (i.e., play) before Jasmine settles down for her 8:00 p.m. bedtime.

Another facet which defines the social excursions enjoyed by HP and Jasmine includes a "mom's club," an internationally renowned nonprofit organization, uniting 50-100 women who live locally and congregate at a community designation.  The annual fee was a mere $20.00.  In HP's neighborhood, the group of mothers and children assemble on a monthly basis at a fire station, which creates a scene for social exchanges and participation in fun activities (e.g., arts/crafts, musical guests).  Additionally, there is a calendar detailing ongoing events, which mothers can bring their children to attend, ranging in nature from playgroups to "field trips" to local pizzerias.  Every day of the work week contains such an event, and this structured system caters to HP's orderly ways.  This truly benefits mothers who are interested in providing their

children with social stimulation, while conversing with adults themselves, along with physically

leaving their comfort zones to reengage among the community at large.  Perhaps more

specifically for HP, the mothering group enabled her to gauge Jasmine's developmental

advancements and impediments to those in her age group; thus, providing both support and

helpful suggestions.

Admittedly, HP mentions that the playgroups are geared to arouse the intellect and social

needs of older children (e.g., aged 2-3) rather than infants close in age to Jasmine.

Consequently, the young babies interact more with their playmate's toys than with each other,

bringing to light the real need for the group: parental peer interaction that is simple and

effortless:

"…No one is saying…here's the best way to put your child to bed and this is what you should be
doing and nobody does anything like that… it's just basically there to offer you support and just
some people around so you are not stuck in a house all day."

In addition, there are advertised calendar events geared solely for the enjoyment and

involvement of adults.  Such outings tap into fun activities for the mothers, as well as encourage

"dates" between husbands and wives.

HP feels that another factor contributing to maternal adjustment is pure experiential

learning.  She has firsthand encountered the tribulations and expectations involved with

motherhood, which has provided a training ground for the instillation of her newfound wealth of

the knowledge, which she now knows is not intrinsic to motherhood.  She can assess what the

cries of both baby and toddler represent, and appropriately determine amounts of worry or

disregard that should therefore be extended.  HP offers an interesting metaphor to describe the

maternal evolution that took place during her interactions with Jasmine, and how such wisdom

will be passed to future offspring:

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"…I always thought like jumping into a pool like off the diving board in the deep end…newborn and it just takes you out, you get up to the surface in about 3 months and you are up and you are treading water and it gets better.  Now when the second baby comes, I don't know what happens…you might sink to the bottom with a big old weight for a while, but I don't know. That's always how I just thought of it like that because you are just struggling and finally you pop up and you know…it's okay…It's just a waiting game I guess.  I think I would have a better perspective with a newborn again.  I think I would. Doesn't mean it's easier, but I wouldn't be so stressed out."

HP looks forward to the distant future when all of the children she will come to bear successfully pass through their infancy stages and venture into childhood, adolescent, as well as adult completion and household departure.  This offers a sense of relief and anticipation.

HP has difficulty pinpointing the personal advancements that have inevitably evolved from her mothering experience.  While pondering this issue, she concludes that her endurance levels have significantly improved, a phenomenon that she had no choice but to refine if she wanted to survive each grueling day.  This is in accompaniment to the fact that she has increased her skill-set and expanded networked resources.  Moreover, although HP does not feel that her general confidence echelon has been affected, she has derived increased confidence in her mothering aptitude.  This primarily has been cultivated through the parental contacts she has established, in which she is continuously learning new parenting strategies.

Before embarking upon the influential elements that have inspired her SAHM decision and affected her experience, including that of her family, society and other mothers, it is necessary to pause and reflect upon the life that she has presented thus far.  In particular, HP is in the process of accepting her SAHM role with trepidation and looks forward to the period in which Jasmine will progress into older developmental stages, as she predicts that her mothering duties will become more enjoyable and manageable.  Projecting herself into the future is an effective coping mechanism for HP, as it allows her to forge through difficult periods, including

the upcoming infancy stages of her unborn child, and view the such complexities as passing

phases, that can be endured before her eventual return to work.

*Family Influences*

HP was raised in a large Catholic family, in which many of the older siblings helped

guide her and her younger sister's development.  Her mother stayed at home to raise the family

unit, excluding a brief hiatus from her domestic affairs by working as a sales representative; her

father relentlessly committed time to the office, and away from home.

HP describes that her family has an inaccurate understanding of her value system.

Indeed, her parents expressed shock at the prospect of HP becoming a SAHM due to their

erroneous belief that she was geared more to career developments rather than those within the

household.  Such gross miscalculations do not bother HP; she does feel a connection, however to

the parallels between her SAHM choice and that of her younger sister, who stayed at home to

raise three children before filing for divorce and reluctantly reentering the workforce.  HP

describes a different sister, whose experience in the home was less favorable, partially because

she was not involved in outside activities (e.g., mother-child groups):

"My sister…she just went back to work.  Her daughter just went to college.  She just had the one
child, but she didn't have anything…there wasn't anything…you are just stuck in the house all
day…you are kind of revolving around this kid…it's hard…you feel isolated…it's really tough
and this is just a much better way…it makes it much more social and you know…I think the kids
enjoy it more and you enjoy it.  You can enjoy it instead of saying…ugh…going to be a long
day."

Her current immediate family consists of her daughter and husband, and HP describes the

spousal dynamics that take place between herself and DP.  Their differing personalities seem to

complement each other, as she is more structured and prefers to organize her life in a methodical

fashion, whereas DP is more flexible and laissez-faire.  This combination proved to work well

for HP's stress levels, and at the end of the day when her frustrations are heightened, DP

inevitably sails through the front door to provide a sense of serenity.

Since Jasmine's birth, marital interactions between HP and her husband have inevitably

changed.  From a behavioral perspective, the housework has been placed upon her shoulders, an

experience most housewives undergo, since they are "just staying home anyways" and may as

well conduct housework (i.e., "the second shift"), a sentiment toward which HP herself later

concedes.  HP describes the fleeting, albeit mounting conflict between herself and DP after

Jasmine's arrival:

"…so we had some tension…just…you're going through a really tough period.  I can't imagine
going through all that you are going through because he is stressed too with the baby…won't
maintaining the same rapport…you are a little tense at times…there might be…there was a
period of about 2 weeks it was just…you're just kind of not strange, but you are just kind of
separate…just trying to get through the day…and that's all you are trying to do and then I
remember thinking…oh gosh this is the way it's going to be…this is how it's going to be…now
we have a kid…it's just…all this extra work…it's a lot of work…I'm stressed out, I'm tired and
he's…and you are just not connecting, but then time passes and it gets a little easier and you
connect again and it just naturally flows…that was nice to see that kind of comes through a
cycle, but when you start it or you are in it, it's a little bit scary like…if this is how it's going to
be, this really sucks.  I think we are back as a couple where we were before.  We just coordinate
a little more…just a little more work that we did before, but that's come around.  It's just when
you hit that really tough period, I guess with anything you would have some sort of…just
concerned about other things and that's all you can think about…what are you going to do?"

HP provides a glowing report of DP's fathering abilities, while describing his duties in a

conventionally paternal sense.  Specifically, the amount of time he spends with Jasmine revolves

around that of a typical, working parent (i.e., 1-2 evening hours).  Also, his fatherly interactions

are more playful and fun, another classic paternal dynamic, which also coincides with the

lighthearted personality description HP provided of her husband.  The assistance he provides  is

greatly appreciated by HP, who considers him her "backup" and views them as allies working

toward the same shared goal (i.e., family life), and feels the "kinks" they experience in their

marital union are short-lived and will become blissful again as the children age.

*Social Influences*

HP has yet to experience disproving attitudes from people when informing them of her SAHM role, although she believes such negativity is widespread, as she has been indirectly subjected to judgments through defamatory comments made to her SAHM neighbors and friends.  She ironically feels that religious groups would wholeheartedly support her SAHM position, although she herself does not operate from dogmatic religious tenants.  HP firmly believes that each individual should determine their own spirituality, rather than succumbing to cultural doctrine.  Catholicism was the religious conviction bestowed to both HP and her husband from their familial upbringings, although between them, DP is more devout.  Particularly, HP feels that the Catholic church commands rigidly set regulations that most people do not even comply (e.g., birth control usage).

Stay-at-home dads (i.e., SAHD's) are infrequently found in HP's life, although she feels that some men would be the appropriate caregivers and should be based on nurturance and homemaking qualities, rather than fitting the proper gender requirement.  When pressed for a rationale to explain the pervasiveness of women (as opposed to men) who succumb to the SAHM role, HP feels that it is a complicated mixture between social expectations, which therefore dictate who earns a bigger income (i.e., the man), which hence requires him continue working once children enter the equation.  HP feels this vicious cycle is so enduring that even when the woman makes a higher wage, she would most likely relinquish her professional life and maintain the status quo, rather than combat such a vicious cycle.  HP has such a dismal opinion regarding women's choices, which she feels partially stem from religious expectations, that it seems as if she is unable to recognize the great strides women have made in the past decades.

Her social despair combined with her current SAHM position is reminiscent of housewives circa 1950.

*Other Mothers*

The world is filled with diversely ranged perceptions, behaviors, and belief systems.  This range transcends into the parenting realm, and HP recognizes and embraces those whose styles contrast with her individualized familial approach.  She feels that opposing theoretical orientations, even those that are less conventional, will eventually produce developmentally sound adults.  When espousing such global unification, HP seems to operate from the "golden rule," in that she does not extend judgment, for she, in turn does not wish to be judged.  At the same time, she provides examples which contradict such open-mindedness.  Particularly, HP finds the employment of certain maternal strategies jarring, such as mothers who allow their children to sleep with them.  HP muses that such behavior typically stems from youngsters exhibiting discomfort during night hours, and mothers who attempt to soothe their worries by accompanying them to bed.  HP feels that such enabling behavior evolves into catastrophic dependency; however she would never alert such parents of their wrongdoings, as she vehemently disagrees with bestowing unwanted advice.  HP would not want to convey judgment, even if a female friend specifically sought out her guidance regarding which role to choose (i.e., SAHM or career mother), for if the woman should act in opposition to HP's advice, she feels it would provide the woman a great disservice and possibly damage their existing relationship.

When conceptualizing what types of women would be successful SAHMers, HP feels that those who have invested a substantial amount of time and energy toward their career identities (e.g., doctors, lawyers) would struggle:

"You couldn't have…you couldn't be somebody who…really so connected to your profession…you need that for validation…because you really have to let go.  All of a sudden

other things that you held on to for this is who I am are gone.  Somebody who put a lot of time into their career, lawyer, and doctor or something…I don't know if they could…I mean, they can, but I don't know.  That would be…if I had a job that really was just so much a part of me, even somebody who is like an FBI agent or some of these really…that is them…I don't…not that they wouldn't be successful at it, if you set your mind to it, you could, but…that's somebody who should be working…I don't know.  There is definitely people…it's not for everybody.  Some people really…the work place really…work place…they would be really unsatisfied with things here.  At home, it's hard.  Because you've got a lot of repetition and tedious.  There is not a lot of…end of the day you are drooled on, your face has been licked, my hair has been pulled…it's tough.  I don't know who would make a successful one because anybody who sets their mind to it I guess could, but I don't think it's not especially for everybody."

Contrasting her theory of individual parental discovery, HP would offer a generalized and simplistic piece of advice to those seeking family enhancement: to spend as much time as possible with their children.  This can occur both from mothers who work or stay at home, and regardless of seemingly detrimental philosophical parenting techniques (e.g., abrasive parents).  HP truly believes that children will thrive from parents who are interested in their academic, extracurricular and general success.

According to HP, parents-to-be (i.e., "expecting") should break down their walls of structured comfort, and realize that there is nothing they can do to prepare for an undertaking of such magnitude.  This was true for HP, who felt that the warnings she received from seasoned mothers priming her for motherhood were mild compared to the taxing challenges she would actually face.  Again, HP contradicts herself as she becomes frustrated with her neighbor who was not preparing herself to breastfeed:

"We have a neighbor here who is due in July… she is definitely on that side of she has no idea what's coming, because she said…are you taking a breast feeding class and she said…no…they have a lot of lactation consultants at the hospital and I figured if it's not working out that I would go take a class…after the baby came…not thinking that the baby needs to eat 8-12 times a day and if the baby is not breastfeeding, you are going to be miserable. The baby is going to be crying, you are not going to be in a frame of mind to go…when's the next class…and then go attend the class.  But I didn't say anything because I was just like…you have no idea…you better hope breastfeeding works out that you don't need the class because…when I heard her…I'll just take a class after the baby comes…I'm thinking…there is no way…There is nothing you could

say and I tried to think about what someone could say to me that would have alerted me and there is nothing. There is nothing…there is no way they could prepare you."

*Work Life vs. Home Life*

Logically, HP understands that there are both good and bad elements associated with each of life's quandaries. However, the subjective meaning she assigns to such issues sometimes conflict with her objective intentions. For example, [referring to the section, *Mother-to-be,*] HP suggests an aversion toward daycare centers, while later she indicates otherwise:

"…like I said there are a lot of kids in daycare and they do just fine."

Additionally, she downplays the malevolence she previously extended toward mothers who sleep with their children, [originally referred to under the *Other Mothers* segment]:

"…I'm not a 'kids sleeping in bed' person. That doesn't mean your kid is going to turn out to be some awful person because you do it until they are too old…there are so many different ways to raise kids and they still turn out okay, so how can you say that's the wrong way to do it…"

Nevertheless, HP proceeds to list the positive and negative qualities she feels are associated with each side (i.e., working, staying home). The benefits to staying at home include investing the amount of care only a mother can provide her own child, individually tending to the detailed needs of a baby (a hard task for daycare workers operating from high caregiver/child ratios), and developing a strong mother child rapport. Also, the amount of time and authority (e.g., decisions, discipline) SAHMs can provide their children is of striking importance. Advantages for working mothers include the personal, financial, and career advancements that are derived from their professional experiences.

The drawbacks HP associates with working mothers include relinquishing parental authority and influence, and lacking precious time that is needed to formulate the parent-child bond. She extends her heartfelt sympathy toward such working women, and she projects upon them the emotional struggle she, herself would experience as a working mother. HP also feels

women employed in fulfilling jobs are somewhat more justified to work, and may therefore

experience less guilt surrounding "leaving" their children in the hands of daycare providers.

HP believes SAHMs are shortchanged by deficient amounts of mental stimulation they

receive and produce during each never-ending day.  Whereas HP describes the challenges

entailed in her former graphic design occupation, her current challenges have vastly changed:

"On the minus side, you're the person who is there all day and it seems to stretch on forever and
with no end in site.  Like I said, tedious and just like one day rolls into the next and just some
days it's just not very challenging…challenging in some day it may take me 10 minutes to get her
into her shorts…she is struggling…but that's not a real challenge… Day in and day out, that's a
minus…no challenges…not no challenges, but really not the same.  Just not the same.  You don't
feel like you are growing with challenges you have here.  Figure out how to get her to eat
mashed peas instead of how am I going to do this thing…it's not really something you can stick
on a resume."

It is noteworthy that HP finds overall optimism for the SAHMs child and the working

women herself, while the opposite is true with the negative associations; she feels they are

experienced primarily by the SAHM mother and the working mother's child.

*Looking Toward the Future*

When looking at the longevity of her SAHM role, HP anticipates it extending until her

children graduate from high school.  By skimming the surface of a SAHMs duties, one might

surmise that the enrollment into public school systems would eliminate the need for SAHMers to

continue in their domestic roles.  However, as HP carefully points out, there are issues such as

dropping off and retrieving children from their bus stops, supervision during school breaks, and

overseeing mischievous adolescents, all of which many mothers do not take into consideration

when planning their work reentrance.  Luckily, HP and her husband have carefully planned the

execution of their finances, thus enabling a prolongation of her SAHM role; should an

unexpected emergency arise, HP can always conduct freelance work from home.  Reassuringly,

HP believes that as her infants grow into children and adolescents, their increased self-sufficiency levels will automatically reduce the amount of attention they demand.

As HP visualizes herself returning to work, she acknowledges that she will probably restart with an entry-level position, even though all of the mothers she personally knows have become proficiently skilled.  Such mothers have displayed expertise in the following areas: the organization of various schedules, leading youth groups, mediating arguments between children and/or other family members, and bearing the exhausting commutes to and from various clubs and activities.  Despite such dexterity, HP feels that when she returns to work, her prospective employer will not view such mothering duties equating to those of work duties.  Nor does HP think such a smooth conversion should take place, as work and home life are separate entities that ought not crossover into each other's domain.  Although HP is sacrificing eventual career gains by staying at home, she feels that spending time with family is irreplaceably precious.  She hints at a popular parable, which depicts a person on his proverbial deathbed conducting a review of life's regrets, none of which revolve around spending more time at the office; such a message invariably emphasizes family values.

When predicting what kind of woman Jasmine will grow to be, HP hopes to instill character traits within her daughter rather than plowing a specific career path; she would like Jasmine to grow to be a kindhearted, and intelligent woman with many friends, although it is too abstract to envision any further details.  As HP awaits the kind of woman Jasmine will become, she feels that she will not be an overbearing mother who controls which directions her daughter should turn; Jasmine will be responsible for making her own mistakes and learning from them. All future decisions and behaviors Jasmine will eventually display past the magical age of

twenty-one will suffice, for HP believes this signifies the passageway into adulthood, and simultaneously marks the end of her mothering obligation.

*QT Narrative*

*Introduction*

QT is a 34-year-old woman who provides an in-depth analysis regarding her stay-at-home-mother (i.e., SAHM) perspective. QT discusses the childhood, early career, spiritual, and current familial dynamics that have contributed to her unique persona. Such individuality contributes to her specific expectations and relationships, which have thereupon affected her decisions and subsequent experiences. QT submits segments of her life that are intricately woven back to her current mothering role. She describes the phenomenal shift that took place between lackadaisically caring for her firstborn child, Kelly, to that of the emotional, mental, and physical decline evidenced by the birth of her twin children. Throughout her ordeal, QT exposes the sanctified spirituality from which she draws meaning and consolation, as well as the spousal reliance she places upon beloved husband, WT.

*Career Development*

QT recalls the person who inspired her to pursue a career in art; a high school teacher whom she had taken a course from, and had viewed her work throughout the semester's duration, thereby recognizing her creative talents. The confidence her teacher imparted was noteworthy, as he not only identified her burgeoning interest, but instilled a sense of self-assuredness; such elicitation of her abilities prompted application for admission to an art college, known for attracting and generating those in the performing and fine arts, to which she eventually attended. As a freshman immersed in the world of art, it took a few weeks to focus on her general education requirements, but since QT is prideful of her pragmatic mannerisms, she was able to

discipline herself and graduated in 1990.  In a sense, QT felt that her relaxed school environment did not prepare her for the rigorous professional demands she would soon face.

Upon graduation, QT relocated to a nearby metropolis and assumed a position in graphic design for a public relations corporation.  In pursuit of success, QT did not feel that her abilities measured up to those of her colleagues, who seemed to diligently thrive in such an expeditiously paced work environment comprised of high expectations, multitasking, and meeting unrealistic deadlines.  Nevertheless, QT put forth tremendous effort, and felt her hard work was eventually rewarded; her upward career advancements were indicated by increased salary increments, supervisory recognition and personal fulfillment.  However, after four years in such a frenzied milieu, QT's physical health and mental wellbeing began to decline, which led to her eventual departure.

QT embarked upon her second job within the same field, in which her daily tasks and high-pressured expectations remained unaffected; however, the company in itself was smaller and family-owned, creating a supportive and congenial ambiance, to which QT immediately responded.  In transitioning companies, QT undertook a substantial monetary cutback, which she considered a worthwhile sacrifice.  QT maintained a fulltime position within this company for four years, although when she gave birth to her first child (i.e., Kelly) she continued to work from home on a part-time basis.  Looking back in retrospect on her eight years of professional contributions, QT fondly recollects the stimulating array of events she encountered each day, which brought about a sense of excitement to her life.

*Personality*

QT describes her self-image as having both traits and belief systems that embody her existence. These have helped her process life events, and act in accordance. QT's contradictory description of male-liberated independence is sprinkled throughout the interview. As she recalls her childhood ideals, specific fantasies of marriage and children were cast aside in lieu of the obtainment of personal fulfillment (e.g., career advancement); indeed, she did not begin conceptualizing herself in a domestic capacity until her mid to late twenties. QT recollects vague references to her upbringing, which entailed the belief that she would segue, by traditional route, into adulthood and have a family. Perhaps QT faced a sense of dissonance, as she had never fit ultra-feminine stereotypes. As such, her childhood was not filled with role-playing motherly figures, or dressing up baby dolls. Nor have her emotional constrictions compared to those of her girlfriends, in that they seemed to "wear their hearts on their sleeve." Rather, QT describes herself as an introvert, someone who is drained by extensive interactions and who refuels her batteries by solitary confinement. At the same time, she remembers herself as an accommodator, who always sought the approval from those around her. It's not surprising to hear QT describe traits that were evident within her professional identity, and how the negative elements were in constant need of suppression:

"…Determined, hardworking, perfectionist, tightwad, kind of uptight, generally uptight even though I didn't show it, because I was in the type of profession where you know, who cares if you are sweating bullets about a presentation or you are just about to pee in your pants because you are so nervous about presenting…you just do it and do it well and so I learned to kind of suppress a lot of what was really going on with me in order to do what was required…professional speaking…what was required. Everyone does it. There are few people who are nervous before a big whatever…presentation or meeting…I was aware of the fact that I was having some sort of suppressed what I felt…"

QT feels that the selfishness she displayed throughout her life came to a halting standstill once motherhood arrived. Her former unattached status enabled the care and maintenance of her

own needs, whereas she now has three children whose demands, including those that are

frivolous in nature, take precedence over her own and require on-the-spot attention, to which she

is still adapting.  In order to achieve a sense of inner harmony, QT greatly anticipates the daily

1:00-3:00 timeslot, in which her children's quiet time allows for revitalization, to which she finds

guilty pleasure; the refreshed feelings that are derived during this time frame are interpreted as

self-serving.

Practicality is another defining quality that QT feels she possesses.  This quality had been

instilled within her during her formative years and has followed her throughout the course of her

life.  Distinct childhood memories revolve around being taught financial conservation from her

parsimonious mother, who instilled money management lessons by encouraging QT to save her

babysitting earnings.  In college, QT relied upon this sensibility to help choose an appropriate

major; as not to whimsically funnel her creative talents into futility, she decided instead to focus

on a viable degree (i.e., graphic design and illustration) that would enable a lucrative lifestyle,

thereby not succumbing to the "starving artist" phenomenon which prevails among those in the

fine arts.

Perhaps her most striking characteristic is that which adheres to dogmatic religiosity.  Her

upbringing was one whose household valued and practiced Christianity, in that the family prayed

and went to church on a regular basis.  However, QT's inner spirituality did not begin to blossom

until her college years, which is a time when many young adults struggle with life's temptations.

Rather than indulge in such lure, QT began defining her spiritual foundation, on which she relied

during this otherwise experimental phase, and which has become an enduring coping strategy.

Such religiosity has also affected the cognitions which help her understand and define life's

behaviors, such as the fulfillment of destiny's prescribed mothering role, a mission that God has

mandated upon her life:

"…I believe that if I was able to find a man that I would be willing to live with and love and have children with, then it would be almost my responsibility to do that and I'm sure that lots of people would freak if they heard that…what do you mean it's your responsibility to be a mother? But I do believe that as a Christian, if I'm able, then it's our responsibility and duty…even though parenting is so hard and wonderful…do you know what I'm saying…but it's…when I say duty, you are going to be like…what the heck is she talking about? But I mean…if you are able and have children and bring them up in the fear of God, teach them about the bible and do your best to do what's right for them and so I guess I kind of grew up with that understanding of family…or my role as an individual in society…"

*Family Life*

Although QT's parents divorced when she was a young child, she affectionately

recollects childhood memories, in which her mother was readily available to provide continuous

and steadfast love. Although her mother became employed as a preschool teacher, QT was able

to reap the benefits of a SAHM, as corresponding schedules allowed for a readily available

mother, able to meet the needs of her children. Her part-time position did not produce agitation

from adjusting to dual roles, as QT remembers her mother's consistently composed presence,

which enabled her to conduct affairs in traditional fashion (e.g., homecooked meals, homework

assistance, etc.). QT's current SAHM role is undoubtedly aiming to replicate similar

affirmations among her own children; her primary goal is to recreate an arena conducive to

intellectual and emotional growth.

QT's current immediate family consists of the three children she and her husband (i.e.,

WT) brought into the world. She and WT serendipitously met at a mutual friend's 1996

wedding. Until their encounter, each had given way to the fairytale notion of meeting a suitable

romantic partner. Following the suggestive advice of QT's aunt, the couple became engaged.

Although short in duration, this timeframe allowed for conversations with their pastor regarding

hefty marital decisions (e.g., amount of children desired, the presence of a SAHM, financial and household expectations, etc).  Similar in beliefs, the happy couple forged marital union, sustained by their agreed ideals; QT believes that life's smaller setbacks have been conquered by reliance upon this overall value structure.  QT has great love for her husband, whom she describes as the family extrovert, and she hopes that her only son will one day fill his father's shoes by becoming a comparable man of great merit.

*Novice Mother*

For QT, pregnancy was an unusual experience; she describes its peculiarity by referring back to the first segment of her two-fold, conflicting theory (e.g., part one: marital independence; part two: longstanding marital desires), which did not foster precognitive preparations of motherhood.  She recalls the sudden and overwhelming thrust of such conceptualizations, such as viewing the photographed fetus of her unborn child on the sonogram monitor, along with people's reactions to her pregnancy.  When her firstborn daughter, Kelly arrived, QT adjusted to her new motherhood role with ease.  She considers herself to be an older mom, as she gave birth to Kelly at age 30 and feels such maturity enabled her to approach this role with wisdom and expertise that would not have been evidenced in earlier years. She describes the initial acclimation phases toward her newborn child as progressional, as her affections for Kelly escalated with each day.  QT describes the attachment levels toward Kelly as having developed in a way which parallels that of her own emotionally composed personality.  Her response to this attachment has been joyous and accompanied with curious objectivity.

During this timeframe, QT continued to work on a part-time basis from home, which only accumulated to a mere five or ten hours per week, but provided a sense of work stimulation and adult contact.  QT recalls the decision-making process involved with her diminished work

schedule (and eventual departure) with ambivalence; although she had been mentally preparing to commit to her family life, her descriptions indicate feelings of loss. However, since the corporation was an intimate, family-owned business whose values promoted such domestic obligations, her recent transition provided collegial support and encouragement, which then contributed to QT's sense of regretless satisfaction.

Aside from the initial months of awkward adjustment to Kelly's agenda (e.g., midnight feedings), the newfound parents instilled a sense of structured stability in which Kelly eventually assumed. Additionally, QT was able to maintain a sense of mobile autonomy, as she never felt trapped to the confines of her household; she would frequently transport with Kelly on social outings or to run errands. An enabling factor which contributed to QT's ability to come and go as she pleased was that Kelly adapted quickly to the schedule that she and WT provided. QT's subsequent days of carefree motherhood can be best summed up in the following citation:

"…It was amazing, kind of unbelievable and the fact that she was a good little baby, she didn't cry much…kind of made it very pleasant. I could enjoy her. I know there are times when moms…with the twins it was very difficult because of the health problems and stuff…they were born early and those kinds of things…but with [Kelly], the first child, it was just really fun. So I just enjoyed her and do the things that moms do…stare at her all day…play with her…spend time with her. I'd be excited in the morning when you get up and go get her out of her crib so that we could play all day and for me it was an incredibly easy year, because I got pregnant with the twins when she was a year old, so that year was…I described to my husband…this is so easy…I feel like it should be more difficult…I'm not working anymore…[Kelly] and I are enjoying each other, I can go and come as I please…there is such freedom and I love freedom. I like independence and freedom…I like I feel I have no restraints and she…even though she was my first child, I didn't feel restrained by her. She'd go and come with me. She was an easy baby, so we enjoyed one another and I didn't experience the thing that you experience…"

*Negative Reactions to Motherhood*

QT's experience with her fraternal twins, however, generated a rapidly paced downward spiral. At the culmination of her second pregnancy, QT was not anticipating the arrival of two additional children; however, she put forth effort to appreciate such revelations. Her twins, a boy

and a girl, prematurely entered into the world with many physical ailments.  Long gone were the

days in which QT could breeze in and out of the house effortlessly; the elimination of such

excursions left her feeling hopelessly enclosed, and in desperate need of social interaction.

Likewise, the part-time work she clung to with Kelly had also been discarded; the disparity in

QT's mothering experience is evidenced as follows:

"It was totally crazy and I wanted to send my head through the wall.  At times I'd walk
around…you are going to think I'm an awful mom, but I don't care.  I will speak the truth
here…at times when the infants were…the twins were young, I'd walk around to the butler
station where no one could see me and I would just bang the wall with my hand because it was
so frustrating and of course I didn't want to hit my kids, so I'd go over there and hit the wall and
I'd think…so what…I have to release it somehow and I don't want to release it in front of my
kids, but it was always crazy.  The infants were premature and they were on monitors and one
had some trouble with her blood…red/white count was low and the boy had breathing
trouble…respiratory…..so they were all gathering here and [*Kelly*] was trying to play with me
and adjust to the twins and the twins were always crying, they were throwing up, because they
had… and projectile vomit and they were always hooked up to these apnea monitors and so we
were kind of confined to the house also because I didn't want to…I just couldn't handle all of
them when they were infants…going out with these apnea monitors and [*Kelly*] was running off
and it was too much."

        QT's mothering experiences seems to have been marred; in fact the semantics she used

thereafter to describe her own children, as well as children in general seemed to reflect such

obscurity.  She referred to all children having an "evil streak," that her own were "really goofy

kids.  They want to do really stupid things," and "…with kids, they are just so obnoxious

sometimes and when I say obnoxious, I really truly mean it…"  Indeed, the transition was so

difficult, that periodic fantasies of returning to the familiarity of her former career, and thereby

easing up her burdensome new life, would filter through her mind.  QT differentiates one big

difference, though, between work and family obligations, in that the latter cannot be forgone

once the workload becomes unbearable; despite intermittent frustrations, she has made an

everlasting commitment.  Her generalized outlook has placed her burdensome obligations above

personal desire.

More pronounced than ever are QT's needs for freedom and independence, particularly

evidenced now since these elements are devoid from her life.  QT expresses a sense of captivity

that her children produce:

"…parenting sometimes goes against what I want as an individual.  I like freedom and I don't
like to feel hemmed in and when you've got 3 little kids physically grabbing onto your legs,
everybody wants something else, I just want to kick them off sometimes, but I can't.  So I have to
deal with them one at a time and be calm and it happens all day long…I'm not just talking about
around lunch and dinner time.  All day long.  They are still young, so they are all over me all the
time.  Sometimes I feel like I'm being swarmed by a bunch of flies or something.  But I
understand why they are doing it.  They are very needy, young kids…"

Not surprisingly, QT has responded to some of the unappealing aspects of motherhood

with predictable distaste.  She does not find fulfillment in housework, nor is she partial to the

way mothering has affected her physical features.  In addressing the latter issue, QT is not able to

devote maintenance toward a beauty regime as she did prior to motherhood.  Due to time

constraints, she often feels unkempt; QT feels that many mothers she encounters look akin to her

and feels they should collectively make an effort to enhance their outward appearances.

*Adjusting to Motherhood*

As a devoutly religious woman, it makes sense that a primary coping strategy utilized by

QT to get through adversity would be to rely upon divine intervention.  QT trusts that God will

get her through any encountered hardship, partially by empowerment and also by instilling

qualities to compensate for those in which she lacks (e.g., patience).  During periods of quiet

meditation (i.e., her children's naptime), QT is able to open her heart to God, which helps impart

calm tranquility.  Also, consultation with biblical scripture and direct contact with God (i.e.,

prayer) provide QT with an understanding of the dilemmas God has encumbered upon her life.

Corresponding to her derived sense of introversion, QT finds it necessary to physically

separate herself from stressful family situations.  With cooperation from WT, on a biweekly

basis she is able to temporarily abandon her household duties while relishing in unaccompanied bliss to run errands, to indulge in frivolous luxuries not otherwise afforded (e.g., coffee breaks), and to allow herself solitary consumption of individual thoughts and prayers.  At times QT will leave the children with a babysitter, but only if the twins have settled down for a nap leaving Kelly as sole benefactor.  QT believes a caregiver would be too overwhelmed at the prospect of concurrently tending to her triad.

Typified earlier as a person able to suppress her inner disposition, QT is therefore able to restrict the feelings of anger she experiences from motherhood.  However, this ability has been put to the test since becoming a mother, and QT feels that many of the undesirable qualities that she would have otherwise been able to stifle have inexplicably surfaced.  In particular, she harshly makes specific reference to her "sinful" wrongdoings, and feels that impatience, impulsivity and a flared temper are hard to contain.  Nevertheless, while affirmative emotionality should always be displayed to her children, QT makes an active effort to restrain negativity, both behaviorally and verbally, as she vividly details:

"…we should show emotions of course and show them that we love them and hug them after we discipline them or punish them, kiss them and play with them, but we can't act on our emotions or I'd always be…my temper…I'd always be losing my temper, I'd always be impatient…I would be a bad mom and even now I feel like I'm a bad mom at times because the pressure just gets too high…too hot and so I step away…" "…at least that's what I pray that if I lose my temper with [*Kelly*] every now and then that I just pray that she won't remember…even though I'm not saying that I beat my children, I don't, but if I lose my temper with [*Kelly*]…I don't want her to learn the word dumb…I know she'll eventually learn that word and other words, but I'm not going to speak to her like that.  Calling something she did dumb."

Carrying over the skills that previously enabled her to function in a high-stress work environment toward her current home environment have also facilitated QT's adjustment levels.  Moreover, she has allowed herself to process and react in a more intuitive, "maternal" fashion, which requires her to pay close attention to internal dialogues and premonitions.  Finally, a

deeply profound piece of advice is offered by QT, in which she speaks to the struggles we each

face, and how to surrender to such predicaments:

"…Yeah you do it and you deal with it and you realize that…this is life on earth.  This is life. To
expect to be disease free, problem free is really a lie…do you know anyone like that?  We all
have problems; we all have challenges in life. When I was single, I had problems…different
types of problems than I have now and this is our existence here…it's not a perfect world and so
I know that…"

*Lifestyle*

QT's life follows an intriguing format, in that she seems to concentrate her energies into a

single area.  After time, such intensity requires withdrawal, and refuge toward a safe haven is

sought, which allows for equilibrium restoration.  The first in a series of such retreats took place

at the offset of college, prior to becoming employed fulltime:

"…I didn't want to get a job as quickly as I did, but I felt that I moved back home for just a few
months and I thought I'd get my resume in order, my portfolio was there…I was kind of
ready…but I was so burnt out from school that I needed to chill.  I didn't want…I'm not talking
about bumming off my parents, I really needed to refocus…I needed to gain a sense of reality or
something.  School was a funny thing for me.  I was so focused on the work that I was doing that
I didn't live a very balanced life and so I needed to kind of get away from the thought of work
and school and just get myself regrounded…"

This pattern repeated itself upon the termination of her first job, as she and her mother

left America, and sought fortification in Egypt, thus enabling rejuvenation.  Upon meeting WT

two years later, her life once again resumed its hurried pace.  They became engaged six weeks

after making each other's acquaintance, and married five months following their engagement;

both she and WT shared a desire to accelerate their relationship; perhaps they saw family life

rapidly passing by, or maybe they felt a religious obligation toward procreating the human

species.  Once again, life was moving in rapid succession as QT became pregnant a year later.

Foreseeing a necessary break, QT planned to begin maternity leave three weeks prior to her

anticipated delivery date, to which she intended to rest and mentally prepare.  This plan was not

carried to fruition, as she gave birth to Kelly three weeks early, leaving only four days of respite.

Consequently, she was ill prepared to face the excruciating mental and emotional exhaustion that

took place in the delivery room.  QT expresses disbelief at the abrupt transitions that have taken

place in her life since giving birth to Kelly, and shortly thereafter to twins:

"…It's pretty much of a shock…like in the last 3 years, I've had 3 children…in the last 4 or 5 years…I've gotten married and had 3 children. That's a shocker…and twins!  Premature twins with medical problems.  That adds a whole other dimension…I don't know…except that it took a lot of time.  I've been reacting a lot in the last few years.  Reacting to the needs…boom, boom, boom…one after the other…one on top of the other…"

Due to her busy responsibilities, QT's lifestyle lacks a social component.  The

combination of her introversion and independent mannerisms has never required external

interactions and companionship.  However, in response to her asocial college years, upon

graduation QT made a conscious effort to extend herself to friends and coworkers.  An

interesting comment was made, in that QT felt that the large city in which she resided

encouraged social promotion over career development; however, it is an area otherwise

renowned for its professional demeanor.  As a current SAHM, QT does not require extensive

socialization; she feels that spousal interaction, although somewhat muted since her children's

arrival, is sufficient.  When she does circulate with the outside world, it is usually with fellow

SAHM'ers or with members of her bible study.

*Opposing Viewpoints*

QT has distinct opinions regarding both how she feels others perceive her SAHM status,

and how she in turn ponders the working mother's reality.  In addressing the former, a part of QT

feels that during her first pregnancy and simultaneous final stages of her career, coworkers

envied her upcoming SAHM plans; a sentiment to which she did not wish to reinforce by

displaying a sense of disproval to the working mothers:

"Family members were totally for it. Coworkers…they just kind of couldn't believe it…some of them had that reaction…most of them and even those that kind of joked about it early on…but they all generally speaking, I would say they all supported it. I was surrounded by other mothers who were coming to work or fathers who had to take their kids to daycare because their wives were going to work…so I started to feel like…I was hoping that these moms would not feel as though I'm standing in judgment over them. This is a choice that I made for my family for me and for my family…not that I was saying they are bad mothers…because I know there was some tension there. I actually tried to play it down a bit. There was a coworker who was pregnant at the same time as me, due just a couple of months later and we actually went to birthing classes together and she was planning on coming back, so there you have two pregnant women in a family oriented environment at work where one is coming back and one isn't and you have to just…and I was kind of in a leadership for the company, so I was kind of leaving…it's a small company…so if one person leaves, it's a big deal, regardless of where you are in the hierarchy…so I guess they couldn't believe it, but then they just respected it and smiled."

At the same time, QT feared the judgments that her work-related clientele might bestow upon her SAHM status, particularly since she had established such a professional rapport, and she did not want them to deem her leave of absence a demotion. QT estimates that between working and SAH mothers, the nationwide predilection would lean in favor of those who were employed, dictated by the costly standard of living to which her community adheres. Likewise, she feels that media influences parallel such ideals, and that mothers portrayed on television work intriguing jobs outside of their "sitcom" homes. Her distaste for this reality (and consequent art-imitating-reality) is apparent, as she feels it endorses an overwrought society.

A larger concern that QT feels the generalized public bestows upon SAHMs is that they have chosen a sagaciously inferior route to directly reflect their intellectual deficits. QT can understand how people would create such a theory; due to time restraints, and constant interaction with the undeveloped minds of children, SAHMs are unable to consume scholarly materials on a regular basis. This, however, does not indicate an inactive mind; quite contrarily, QT believes that simplifying advanced concepts to young children in itself is an overlooked and thought-provoking ability:

"…When you get with a 3 year old when you are trying to teach them that it's not good to hit your brother…well sometimes it's good to explain why, so the hard part is knowing why, but having to explain it on a child's level.  It's hard.  It's like when you know what you might say in Spanish, but you don't know how to say it, so you really have to work hard at maybe using 15 words to say the one word you don't understand.  That takes work and I find that kind of interesting…why do I really not.  Why do I not want her to hit [*name of QT's son*]?  Well, I guess it's pretty obvious, you should be gentle and kind to those you are interacting with, but there are more complicated challenges I face each day and I can't think of any right now, but where you really need to think, okay why is it I don't want my child to do such and such?  I need to know why and I need to know how to communicate it in such a way that she can understand.  That takes some work.  If you kind of want to be a thoughtful parent and not just throw all the commands and stuff out and help them to kind of learn."

Conversely, QT's opinion of dual-working parents is examined.  Interestingly, she does not feel that the stay-at-home status should be gender-related; rather, financial concerns (e.g., the parent making a lesser salary) should dictate who will be homebound.  Additionally, QT does not put much faith in the presumption that women are more nurturing and, therefore, have superior relations with children than that of their male counterparts.  Regardless of which parental figure stays home, QT does think it is crucial to have such a presence.  She does not believe that the quality of time spent with children supercedes quantity; she feels children do in fact need continuous time with their stay-at-home parent, and those from dual-working households are not able to infuse moral development.

*Future Thoughts*

QT has hope that the future will bring a reduced workload that will eventually enable her to reestablish her artistic self.  Once the twins become school-aged, her desire is to creatively produce artwork in a capacity that will utilize her imagination; it need not be a lucrative endeavor, as she would be willing to become either a paid employee or a volunteer.  With regard to her children's educations, she can envision enrolling them into a private school that promotes the "classical" philosophies.  Her understanding of such a method entails children honing skills that are futile in public schools such as learning the Latin language and taking courses in logic;

her husband is more passionate about enrolling their offspring into such an institution, and is willing to pay costly tuitions, whereas QT's interest is piqued, but she also has faith in county-wide schools. Aside from educational viewpoints, the expectations she hopes her children achieve are more general, in that as adults, she would like them to display respect and fulfill life's expectations.

Advice she would provide to a woman who is looking toward developing a future family chiefly revolves around finding a fitting husband, such as WT. One suggested strategy predicting if a potential suitor would make an appropriate father figure would be to imagine bearing this man's son; if such a visualization pleasurably includes a son whose traits are that of the "miniature" father, then QT would suggest going forth with the nuptials. Even with the perfect man, QT would suggest women to uphold realistic expectations, and to organize their lives to prepare and accommodate for such inevitable hardships.

<div align="center">*RZ Narrative*</div>

*Introduction*

The following account portrays "RZ," a 31-year old stay-at-home mother (i.e., SAHM) whose twin children (i.e., Ann, Steve) were one year and nine months old at the time of the interview. RZ openly exposes her life story, beginning with a tumultuous childhood, followed by the amorously filled college years in which she and husband, "BZ" began their lifelong romance. RZ describes the religious ideology that she and her husband unconditionally entrust, along with early teaching jobs she held, whose shifting value structures altered her amounts of derived satisfaction. RZ also provides a thorough depiction of her charismatic personality, convictions, and strict code of ethics, all which have affected her mothering domain.

*Early Influences*

During a small portion of her childhood, RZ was raised by her very own SAHM; upon reflection, she recalls her mother, a woman who was not rewarded by her children's splendor, and who seemed apathetic and fatigued by life itself.  RZ's mother did not heartily interact with her children's affairs, and instead spent many hours acquainting herself with the television set, as she ate in solitude or consulted with friends by way of the telephone.  RZ's SAHM did not model an existence marked by captivating and graceful allure.  Simultaneous to her mother's misery, RZ paradoxically felt that she reaped the benefits of having her mother at home; even colored by jaded discontent, her mother was physically present within the household, able to do things for her offspring that working mothers could not, such as prepare special snacks prepared with motherly love "…I do remember coming home to graham crackers with little homemade fudge on top…"

With time, RZ's mother could not maintain her façade, and left the household, leaving RZ's father to raise the children.  RZ alludes to the feelings of betrayal felt by the entire family, but the exact nature of her mother's wrongdoing is uncertain; RZ provides a vague description insinuating her mother's conduct was immoral and extended beyond leaving her husband and children.  The actual transgression was too painful for RZ to discuss.  In looking back, RZ objectively extends partial blame toward her father for not providing the necessary support to his wife, a struggling SAHM.  Nevertheless, the distressing outcome was undeniable, a situation that required RZ's father to step forth and care for his three children, and although he worked fulltime, he somewhat resembled both a SAHM while simultaneously providing his paternal influence.  RZ seems to have mixed feelings about her father's "maternal" function; in her recollections, she feebly approves of the authority he asserted, but also feels that he relinquished

too much parental control and refers to him as a "Disneyland dad" (i.e., more invested in sports/recreation). From a psychodynamic perspective, one might wonder if RZ transitioned into the metaphorical "mother/wife" role to fill the void of her mother's absent presence.

Undoubtedly, living without her mother must have been quite painful and awkward and it was hard to broach female-related issues without her maternal role model. Upon menstruation, RZ recalls the embarrassment she and her father mutually felt while he stood behind her closed bedroom door, equipped with a box of sanitary napkins, attempting to launch a "birds-and-bees" conversation. Later, upon entrance to college, RZ's father gave an additional piece of paternal advice, which he must have partially derived from his own experience: he requested that she not pursue her "Mrs." Degree, which she did not fully understand at the time, although now she realizes he did not want her to seek marital union. This reverts back to the relationship dynamic (i.e., "Electra Complex) that was thrust upon RZ and her father as they grieved an absent maternal figure. Did the prospect of losing his daughter and "wife-figure" for another man (i.e., BZ) induce anxiety, stirring up painful memories of his wife's abandonment?

RZ feels that the current relationship she has with her parents is quite pleasant; she adores her dad, and feels that her mother has overcome the previous issues that seemed to haunt her existence, and has evolved into a mature and competent woman. RZ also feels more appreciation toward the difficulties her mother once faced, as she is now in the throes of such motherhood issues herself.

As a child, RZ was more interested in rough-and-tumble play outdoors than partaking in stereotypical female activities, or adorning herself with feminine garb. Nevertheless, RZ thoroughly enjoyed babysitting the neighborhood children on a regular basis, beginning at the tender age of twelve. Based on the negative childhood experiences her own SAHM, who

resented her status, seemed to provide, it is intriguing that RZ herself decided to become a happy SAHM. One might speculate upon the underlying reasons; was babysitting (her first caretaking role) a subconscious attempt to fulfill a sense of nurturance into her life, upon which she wound up enjoying in aftermath? Was her SAHM decision based on a need to challenge herself to directly overcome the issues her mother faced, or even to protect herself from these challenges? Could she have benefited greatly from the sporadic moments of nurturing her mother extended, or the clumsy but kindhearted attempts of her father?

*Religion*

RZ felt that the halfhearted attempts her parents made to instill religious underpinnings within her childhood were futile; she did not feel the messages carried the amount of merit that she currently attributes to her Christian identity. Although RZ was raised in a religious household and attended church on a weekly basis, it wasn't until her college years that she began creating her own religious parameters. During this time, she and BZ attended a seminar which addressed Christian principles, while encouraging the participants to reformulate their whole lives to pay constant tribute to such religious ideals. Indeed, the sermon inspired RZ and her husband to examine, from a Christian stance, "how we breathe, how we think, how we view the world," and aimed at changing their outlook in every realm, including home, work, social life, and community (i.e., neighborhood, and world-at-large) environments. The forum certainly succeeded and it spoke to both RZ and her husband, who had been aiming to manifest their strong moral standards into a concrete systemized structure. Whereas many religions congregate on a weekly basis, requiring members to consciously purify their hearts and souls for one hour per week (e.g., Sunday morning) leaving the remaining week open to hypocritical sin, this new philosophy required relentless faith to which its followers were able to continuously put their

theories to practice. Based upon RZ's desire to intensify her religiosity, one might speculate that she was seeking refuge from her lifestyle, in that she may have viewed elements to have been either "wrong" or "painful." In her pursuit of religious asylum, what was she anticipating such pilgrimage would yield; specifically, what was she looking for in life, and what did she hope to find?

Structuring her life from such a philosophy begins with the way in which RZ processes the events in the world around her. RZ believes that human beings are constantly faced with malevolence, but that they should be in constant attempt to learn from their wrongdoings when they stray from the path of righteousness, while simultaneously asking for forgiveness. At the same time, she views all of life's elements from a Godly perspective, including both living creatures and inanimate objects, and believes that everything originated from the same source (i.e., God) "…If we were walking on the beach and we picked up a beautiful pocket watch, nobody would say that's just evolved…" Additionally, RZ is always searching for underlying meaning behind the actions, interactions and events that take place between people, as well as between people and inanimate objects. She wholeheartedly believes that life is a masterfully designed plan, to which all of its mysteries, heartaches and joys are purposeful and predetermined. This belief has enabled her to commemorate alleged trivialities, as well as appreciate disappointments and embrace her life roles (i.e., wife, SAHM). Additionally, RZ feels that the duties required of her within her life roles have been preset, and has therefore structured her family life hierarchically beginning with paternal dominance, but which also relies heavily upon maternal support. She likens the parental roles she and BZ have acquired to those of a soccer team; there are certainly significant players who have more manipulation over the

game's outcome, although the secondary players are essential to star players' enhanced performances.

Moreover, the choice of semantics RZ utilizes is very distinct; the words she selects convey her fervent religious beliefs and are constructed with prosaic poeticism to communicate powerful messages that are heartfelt, visual, and symbolic in nature.  If sentence structures are the vehicles by which we transmit our inner psyches, then it is significant to examine RZ's means of expression:

[*in response to children questioning the need to understand mathematical concepts*] "…you need to know how to do all of these things because you are called to be stewards over the earth and to be gracious, humble participants here and that's why you need to know the math and these things are beautiful, true and lovely and they are a reflection of God and Heaven…"

Indeed, during the course of the interview, RZ's robust language was so influential that the researcher modified her typical rhetoric and asked questions which reflected similar idiomatic expressions:

"What do you think is a message that can be conveyed that you really would like to scream out on top of the mountains and say, this is what you guys need to know about my job?"

*Education*

RZ has always been an astute learner, and currently prides herself on her voracious desire to accumulate knowledge.  Growing up in public schools, her 4.0 grade point average maintained its excellent standing, although she regrettably feels that during such years she did not dissect scholarly information as thoroughly as she should have; rather, she was the type of student who learned the information for tests, but did not process the material in a thought provoking manner. In traditional mode, upon finishing high school, RZ went onto college to pursue a degree in business, and then transferred to the education department.  This shift within her educational domain is quite fitting, as her personality seeks to moralize and inspire those in her life; it also

symbolizes the "religious renovations" she underwent during this timeframe to mend life's

obscurities.  Her first teaching job following college was located within a public school, an

endeavor which she quickly eschewed for a job within a privately owned school, whose

principles followed those of the "classical model."  In the following vignette, RZ describes

schools to whom apply the classical philosophical tenets, and vivaciously explains the procedural

and rigorous academia she was able to provide her students by operating from this classical

framework:

"…They are based on the tribune…the Greek and it's the grammar school, used to be the public
schools is based on the tribune…usually elementary schools and the grammar schools you are
just memorizing oodles of information.  For instance, my class we memorized Chapter two…we
memorized tons of poetry, we memorized kingdom, the whole classification system in
science…just what it was and then we do time lining so they memorized…they had books for
what's happening in history at different times, so things kind of fit together and they don't think
of history in isolation, so the grammar school is just memorizing and then you have the school of
logic which comes next so they start putting that information together and making sense of it and
then school reiterates, which is like your high school years and that's where you are getting into
fence for these things.  They start early.  They start Spanish in Kindergarten, Latin in third grade,
and they take these things all the way up.  We start grammar in first grade, so my second graders
were structuring sentences and talking…"

　　　　RZ felt that the teachers in public schools were worn-out and lacked the passion she

seemed to possess.  More importantly, RZ wanted to work in a learning institution which would

allow her to mold her student's religious development, as well as work from low teacher-student

ratios; both of these elements were ones public schools could not provide.  As a devoutly

spiritual woman, RZ found concealing her belief systems within the public school system to be

an oppressive and substandard experience.  Because she understands the world primarily through

religious discernment, it was difficult for RZ to explain concepts in the secular manner required.

She faults public school systems for demanding their teachers to operate and teach from the

"blank-slate" stance, as she feels that it is the natural tendency for students, regardless of their

worldview (e.g., Christian, Buddhist, etc.)  to gravitate toward value-laden postures, or to create

such meaning themselves.  Therefore, RZ believes that public school teachers should advertise their specific religious convictions, thus providing parents with a "menu" of classrooms to which they can suitably enroll their children.  Finally, RZ felt that she shared similar morals with her colleagues at the classical, privately owned school, particularly with regard to her decision to become a SAHM.  The sustenance and encouragement they provided were tremendous, which she feels may have been deficient in a more liberal, public school setting.

RZ and her husband feel their children should attend educational pursuits outside of the home, rather than engage in home-school learning.  Primarily, RZ feels that her children need peer stimulation and socialization that would be absent within a home setting.  From a distance, RZ can understand why some parents would insist upon schooling their children themselves, as they may wish to apply hearty academic stimulus not found within the school system (e.g., Latin).  However, as a former teacher, she often found the opposite to be true, in that many mothers disgracefully guided their children's erudition with indolence.

*Personality*

RZ specifically references her derived code from The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (i.e., MBTI), in which she feels adequately explains aspects of her personality.  The MBTI is a widely recognized career and personality assessment, divided into the following four categories: Extroversion/Introversion, Sensing/Intuition, Thinking/Feeling, and Judging/Perceiving.  Upon taking the MBTI, an individual placement within each category is determined and positioned upon a continuum; a person preferring "Extroversion" can lean toward the extreme extroversion side, or fall just slightly past the middle of the Extroversion/Introversion continuum, indicating a weaker extroversion preference, and thus designating more of a balance between the two dichotomies.  RZ's MBTI score did not include any equidistant preferences, all of her categories

fell toward the extreme sides of the continuum, making her a strong "ESTJ."  Her preference for

extroversion (i.e., "E") indicates a need to socialize, as her energy levels are replenished through

interactive conversations and intermingling amongst others, as opposed to quiet reflection.  The

second category in which she scored an "S" (i.e., sensing) reflects her perceptions of the world

through a concrete, detail-oriented and presently-oriented lens, in contrast to intuitive (i.e., N)

individuals who are more abstract, mindful of patterns (i.e., "the big picture) and tend to be

futuristic.  Thirdly, the differentiation between her thinking score (i.e., T) and the feeling (i.e., F)

component is based on how a person makes decisions; the former does so through objective

logic, while the latter conducts matters from subjective and personalized affect.  The final

grouping indicates preferential lifestyles; those, such as RZ, who lean toward the judging (i.e., J)

side enjoy structured stability, while those who score as perceiving (i.e., P) are flexible and

unstructured.

Throughout the interview, RZ makes particular references to her partiality toward

extroversion, thinking and judging qualities.  In addressing her extroverted features, she alludes

to the difficulty she had adjusting to solitary parenthood, after her support system (i.e., extended

family members) had departed, eliminating not only assistance but more importantly, their

stimulating conversations.  It makes sense that RZ thereupon constructs her days to include

plenty of outings (e.g., trips to the park), which surely fulfills her desire to engage in dialogue

with others.  Her "thinking" trait (i.e., T) is demonstrated through her insatiable curiosity about

how things operate, and a desire to keep her intellectual reasoning intact throughout her

mothering journey. This is further evidenced by her love of educational pursuits, which, when

embarked upon, help her flourish; she regrettably did not take advantage of expanding her

knowledge during college, in which she wished to have studied more subject matter (i.e.,

History, English, Music, Religion) as opposed to concentrating on teaching techniques, the primary focus of her education major.

Most notably, the judging (i.e., J) characteristics are evidenced within RZ, as she finds comfort in fixed agendas and orderliness, and is able to maintain a sense of methodical control when authorizing smaller amounts of individuals.  Thus, she expresses satisfaction toward working in her former private school with low teacher-student ratios, as well as maintaining her composure during the difficult task involved with mothering twin babies.  To declare control upon the latter, implementation of a specific and immediate schedule was of great assistance.  At one point during the interview, RZ revealed with eager delight an instance which contradicts her usual systematic ways; she and her family decided to take a spontaneous weekend trip, an example she found amusing.

An additional element that defines RZ's personality is the overwhelming sense of gratitude that she possesses.  She enthusiastically appreciates all of life's miracles, and simultaneously welcomes the learning lessons that accompany each inevitable stumbling block. She is eternally thankful for her husband, and feels that he enables her current enjoyable SAHM experience, as well as internalizing adoration within herself "…It's a treat to be me!..." RZ feels that her love of life would be evidenced even if she had chosen alternative life routes (e.g., a different college major),  Her optimism is unique and invigorating, and is illustrated not only through actual statements, but also through expressive animation, cheerful mannerisms and nonverbal gestures (e.g., constant smiling).

*Opinions*

RZ has marked opinions toward individuals employed within "unconventional" roles, defined by those which are foreign to her esteemed lifestyle.  She empathizes with the anguished

working woman, who must constantly yearn to be by her child's side; she feels such an employed route is primarily dictated by financial concerns, over personalized choice. As such, RZ feels that mothers forced upon the trenches of the working world should not be damned, as their efforts are driven by altruistic means. With regard to stay-at-home-dads, she does not feel this role is inherent to men; however, she does mention extreme cases when fathers may need to take command of the maternal role, such as cases involving abusive, neglectful, or unhappy SAHMs. Such a statement must be based upon the plight she witnessed with her own family, in that she received primary nurturance from her father, whom by her own definition lacks the intrinsic ability to properly nurture. Perhaps this dynamic is one of many factors inciting a need to "spiritual cleanse" her soul at the onset of college.

Another distinguishing factor related to RZ's outlook on life revolves around the "high" status-related opinions she holds. In college, before becoming an education major, RZ was in the process of obtaining a business degree, which she felt held more honor and prestige. In fact, during business-related internships she lacked fulfillment, although she reluctantly delayed the transition into teaching, for she felt it did not hold distinctive cachet. She refers to the childhood fantasies of both little boys and girls, who visualize themselves as something grand, such as doctors and lawyers. It was not until she became religiously reformed that she found error within her arrogance; however, when describing her former position during the interview, she portrayed that she "was just a teacher." Additionally, prior to her SAHM status, she seemed to harshly judge the validity of such a lifestyle, doubtlessly based upon her mother's sloth, evidenced by the following passage:

"…I just thought it seemed kind of boring…kind of stale and it was. I think…that's all you are able to do is eat yourself in front of the TV while your children run around…just taking care of the laundry and that's difficult. I think it is so important to keep your mind sharp. There has been a lot of research on IQs of mom's dropping with each child and you can see how that would

happen if you are not continuing to read, disengaging yourself from the culture and husband and friendships and relationships that you  might have with other couples before children, so maintaining all those things is essential…"

Although she presently finds her SAHM role worthwhile, she oftentimes worries that others will bestow criticism upon her way of life.  She feels that social norms do not cherish the SAHM; such a widespread belief trickles down upon her own identity, leaving periodic feelings of self-doubt.  Particularly, when networking with other women who engage in high-profile or exciting careers, she fears that they will view her role with disdain; such condemnation has yet to occur, partially because RZ credits herself with hard work.  She feels comforted and reassured when her friends display curious fascination toward her mothering duties.  RZ's ambivalence toward other people's perceptions of her role is captured in the following statement:

"I think just keeping up conversations with friends.  It was amazing to me that they were really interested.  You hear women, they don't have children, so I thought, they are not going to want to…but what I realized was, you know what—Imp not a secret service agent, I don't hang out with the President, but yet that still is interesting to me.  So, I think that is helpful.  Just that you don't have to have an immediate connection with something to be interesting.  I think it's just pride too.  At least with me it is, I don't know about most moms, but it's just…from a young girl you want to be the doctor, the lawyer…"

*Husband*

RZ met her husband, BZ, during their freshman year of college, when both were just 18 years of age.  They dated throughout the duration of college, in which RZ describes the relationship as innocently abstemious, although their intense and mutual love was professed by BZ on their second date.  The revelation of this heartfelt sentiment overwhelmed RZ initially, although she could not help to reciprocate his feelings based on his handsome and beguiling ways.  After four long years, their courtship phase culminated in marriage at the offset of college, during which time BZ pursued an MBA and RZ student taught.  BZ currently combines

the managerial elements of his Master's degree with the technical elements displayed while

obtaining a Bachelor's degree in engineering; he currently functions as a business developer.

RZ describes her husband as possessing a personality paralleling her own; indeed, their

MBTI scores are the same (i.e., ESTJ) indicating desired preferences in the four previously

described categories.  Such a need for structure and control, which partially is reflected through

the judging ("J") scale on the MBTI can also be understood through similar birth order

placements, as she and BZ are both the eldest children and are therefore sensible and

conscientious.  From a clinical perspective it is surprising that their dual first-born statures do not

result in competitive rivalries, as RZ feels that having a husband so similar in temperament has

enabled them to establish a deep connection with each other; their intriguing conversations are

guided by shared intellectualities, as well as understanding each other's common value systems.

Possibly resulting from their similarities as well as shared religious upbringings, they

concurrently consumed the reformed religious model together at the same rapid pace, and delight

in each other's company during the participation of weekly religious bible studies.  Likewise,

they both similarly value the role of SAHM, and both felt it necessary for RZ to stay home and

provide maternal nurturance to their offspring; although sometimes reprimanding her parenting

style, (which RZ views as helpful), BZ ultimately extends tremendous support toward his wife's

SAHM role:

"…So my husband is very good. He calls throughout the day.  So I think that helps that I have a
husband that is willing to hold me accountable and is always willing to just encourage me
greatly.  He loves that I stay home with the children and just thinks it is the most amazing
sacrifice.  He's thinking of sacrifice, I'm thinking it's privilege, so it's a good fit…"

Additionally, BZ shows support by encouraging his wife to socialize with other women

while he watches the children.  His other admirable qualities include excellent communication

skills and a profound love for his wife, which might periodically border in extremism, as

evidenced in the following sentiment that he expressed during RZ's pregnancy: "…I'm just gonna love these children but I'm just so worried that you are going to love them more than you love me…" Despite such a severe statement, both parents believe in each other, love each other, and feel an importance in modeling such affection upon their twin children.

Although RZ and her husband seem to have striking character resemblances, they are nonetheless, two separate people who invariably will display diversity. One such difference is their discrepant upbringings, in that RZ had a SAHM, and BZ's mother worked outside of the home due to financial constraints. Despite this pattern, RZ does not feel that her husband has the inherent ability to stay at home to raise children; this is not because of personal incompetence, but rather based upon the premise that men lack innate maternal ability, combined with his lack of confidence and interest in staying home. Another striking variance between the couple includes their levels of affection. Of the two, BZ is much more physically demonstrative, a man who enjoys warm embraces and constantly displays his love outwardly, compared to a much more reserved RZ. Again, from a Freudian viewpoint one might speculate that such reservations may result from her unique father-daughter relations during childhood, which were less hierarchical and required RZ to undertake the maternal role of her absent mother. Currently, does RZ associate her husband to that of her father, and therefore engaging in spousal intimacy represents incestuous transgression?

*Preparations*

RZ and her husband prepared for the particulars of parenthood in the early stages of their relationship, and they both wanted to have a household full of children, although they were unable to get pregnant within the first six years of marriage. She did not realize at the time, but now feels that her years of teaching helped prepare for pending motherhood, as well as watching

from afar female friends give birth, noting the reactions and relations to their budding families. Now a mom, RZ still feels reliant upon such women to guide and advise her through upcoming developmental stages, such as providing toilet-training tips.  Upon visualizing her future direction, RZ remains uncertain in her expectations.  Based on how many children she and BZ produce, they will determine if and when she goes back to work, and in what capacity.  Tentative decisions have been broached regarding her children's future educational placements; their future financial standing will dictate enrollment in private or public school systems.

*Motherhood*

RZ describes the reality of raising twin babies, as she has never known the phenomenon in which most mothers at one point in time have experienced; manifesting complete maternal devotion toward one child.  RZ will only understand what it is like to spread her love upon multiple children, thus spreading herself thin in the process.  Indeed, the breast feeding ritual itself was quite time consuming, as it seemed like her body was in non-stop production.  Also, the amount of time both infants required was demanding, although it was powerfully rewarding at the same time.  RZ also believes that having twin babies is a blessing, as interacting with more than one human being caters to her preferred extroversion, as well as provides her children with constant playmates, in which RZ can accomplish household tasks.

RZ recognizes parental tendencies to lump twin babies together, as if they were one person, since they typically look similar, are advancing through stages simultaneously, are usually responded to from others in a comparable fashion; a combination of all of these factors, in addition to their shared environmental factors and similar biological genetics typically produces a sense of interconnectedness in attachment and temperaments among twin babies. However, due to their fraternal, dual-gendered status, she feels that this is not the case with her

twin babies.  Indeed, both her daughter and son have very distinct, individualized personalities evidenced at the time of the interview, in which they were one year and nine months of age.

Although different, the personalities of her children undeniably reflect the gendered qualities of RZ and her husband.  Her son, Steve, is very affectionate and requires maternal compassion and attention, while exploring his environment kinesthetically and preferring traditional "boy" playtoys such as trucks and construction utensils.  Whereas daughter, Ann, is much more independent and can operate well on her own accord, but at the same time gravitates toward "girl" activities, such as dressing up baby dolls.  RZ speculates whether Ann's impassivity is a result of Steve's needy temperament; because Ann did not appear to have the same requirements, did her detraction result from giving way to Steve's demands? RZ ponders the alternate possibility, in that she may have been biologically "wired" to be more aloof. Regardless of such etiological concerns, the two infants complement each other's differences and play together quite amiably.  RZ wonders how long her good luck will last, as she has heard that infants become mischievous as they approach toddlerhood.

The difficulties RZ experienced while transitioning into motherhood relate to the lack of focus she channels toward her previous (i.e., "pre-birth") passions.  For instance, as a lifelong learner whose complex thought processes are constantly in motion, she has always been an avid reader.  She mistakenly believed that SAH-mothering would be conducive to exploring various fiction and reality-based literature.  Additionally, she missed her former lifestyle, in which she could partake in informal research, engage in stimulating conversations with others and continue with her teaching pursuits; the latter was missed because of the extensive contemplation she had always applied toward her "classical" teaching strategies, including how and why children

learned.  The reality of constant breastfeeding and interacting with twin babies proved the relinquishment of such stimulating intellectual exercises.

Because BZ sees that RZ's new role restricts her ability to benefit from social engagements, he helps his wife indulge interactively with peers.  To combat decreased amounts of mental stimulation, RZ proactively began reversing some of which had been renounced.  To accommodate her need for literary stimulation, a friend of RZ's suggested that she read short stories which could be thoroughly digested in short timeframes such as while the children are napping, or interacting amongst themselves.  RZ and her husband also enjoy reading poetry together, thus creating their own discussions and interpretations; when she was physically unable to hold up a book (e.g., during breastfeedings), BZ would read directly to her.  Likewise, while instilling a love for poetry upon her young children by reciting various stanzas and nursery rhymes, RZ is actively finding literary fulfillment along with her children.  To benefit her children, the strategies that RZ implements to uphold high mental stimulation standards revolve around constant life lessons that are instructed by "professor" RZ; the ability to teach and learn, both academically, spiritually, and experientially with her children is worthwhile to herself as well, and she puts an incredible amount of energy into this arena:

 "…I usually read to them at the table.  Chapter from the book, chapter of scripture, we practice our ABC…songs, catechism questions with them…it [*catechism*] is a format of like classical technique of asking or response and just asking, but we'll ask them.  Training them about their faith, who they are…They read constantly.  Reading, singing, the TV is never on.  We do puzzles, we are about to transition to paint time…At night there is playtime…crazy things like TCBY and we do our Advent Tree…so we have scripture that we are reading at night and then songs that we sing…turn off the lights and light the candles…that's a fun time.  That's about it. Weekends are a lot of fun.  We try to do things around town."

Although overwhelmingly positive, there are indications that RZ has struggled during her motherhood transition, particularly when spousal communication levels had declined, possibly based on miniscule amounts of time BZ was able to spend with the family due to work

responsibilities.  Also, she becomes distressed when BZ conveys remnants of the "Disneyland

Dad" (i.e., playful dad) evidenced within her own father.  The infrequent, albeit ill-fitting

descriptions RZ provides of her husband tend to be distant (i.e., third person perspective), as if

she is either protecting BZ or partially denying that he has any faults.  Another minor obstacle

RZ has experienced with her motherhood status, and specifically requested to be emphasized in

this research, was the regional differences she noticed between her hometown (i.e., a

southwestern, conservative state) to that of her current residency, which is still considered

southern, but more urbanized.  It was a trivial example that emphasized a larger issue; shopping

carts at grocery stores in her hometown were "mommy friendly," which implies that such a

region may put forth more value toward the mothering, (and SAHM) role.  Despite these

obstacles, RZ did receive a tremendous amount of assistance, particularly right after she had

given birth.  Many female family members flew from their home states to help guide her novice

mothering experience.  Such women included her mother, sister and maternal grandmother,

whom she displays tender affection toward, particularly surrounding the hard work the elderly

woman had submitted throughout her life (i.e., farm work, family work).  She additionally pays

tribute to various community members in her former home state, who assisted her need for

socialization during the initial mothering phases, by congregating with BZ and RZ before

splitting into gendered dyads (i.e., "husbands" and "wives") for group functions.

<div align="center">*Concluding Thoughts*</div>

*Objectives VS Findings*

Upon revisiting the study objectives that were listed in Chapter One, the following

themes were listed to guide the interviews and allow insight into the SAHM world: SAHM

decision-making processes, SAHM realities, the altering self-concepts of SAHMS, changes

surrounding familial and community relationships upon entering SAHMhood, and societal

messages the SAHM's perceive are bestowed upon them.  The "Thematic Graph" located on

page 86, ties together the themes each woman experiences by the creation of a "generalized

subject."  Interestingly, the findings of this study supercede the information hoped to derive

within the objectives section.  As such, the following table has been created to depict the

connections between the initial objectives and the generalized subjects of the narratives, which

combine the information found within the four women's narratives.  As evidenced, many of the

objectives contain several generalized subjects concurrently.  The initial objectives sought to

understand factors that were evident before the women became SAHMs (i.e., "Pre-SAHM"),

such as assessing their decision-making processes, as well as their current SAHM events (i.e.,

"SAHM Experience).  However, one specific area that was not considered within the initial

objectives includes how women anticipate their upcoming futures (i.e., Post-SAHM), including

the fantasies they have for their children's development, as well as how they plan to reemerge

into the workforce.  An overview of all three timeframes (i.e., Pre-SAHM, SAHM Experience,

Post-SAHM) will be interconnected in chapter five, with the discussion of a newly formulated

model (i.e., SAHM Model).

| Initial Objectives | Generalized Subjects |
|---|---|
| Decision-making processes involved with SAHMing | Formative Years, Family, SAHM Career, Identity, Influences, Conflict, Coping, Opinions, Transitions |
| The realities involved with being a SAHM | Family, SAHM Career, Personality, Identity, Influences, Conflict, Coping, Opinions, Transitions |
| Self-concept, and how it has changed or remained the same upon SAHMhood | Formative Years, SAHM Career, Personality, Identity, Influences, Conflict, Coping, Opinions |
| Family Relationships | Formative Years, Family, Education, Personality, Identity, Influences, Conflict, Coping |
| Community Relationships/Outside Messages | Influences, Conflict, Coping, Opinions |

**Figure 3 Objectives vs Findings**

*Improving Belsky*

Moreover, as noted within the literature review, much of the previous mothering research conducted by Belsky (1986, 1988, 1990, 2001) had excluded the sole experience of the mother; this study combats such earlier maladies by concentrating exclusively on the mother, and considers extraneous factors (e.g., family, society) only through the mothers specific lens, and in relation to her direct experiences.  Additionally, this research is unique in that it provides in-depth qualitative analyses within the comfortable confines of each participants home, which contrasts the sterile, large-scaled quantitative studies of the past (Belsky, 1986, 1988, 1990, 2001).

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

*Introduction*

The purpose for this concluding chapter is to make sense of the data that had been collected and analyzed within the realm of the present dissertation.  In other words, chapter five attaches meaningful implications and concluding thoughts to the qualitative research. Given the narratives in chapter four, the current researcher has devised a substantive theory (i.e., SAHM Model) which utilizes participants in the current study to comprehend and explain the complexities surrounding domestic motherhood.  Additionally, two "SAHM portraits" are provided in further attempt to overturn the ambiguous identities associated with fulltime mothers, thus creating a tangible understanding of their realities.  The final portion of this chapter contains concluding thoughts, which describe the implications this study seeks to incite, along with the personal journey revealed through the eyes of the researcher.  Because the research methodology utilizes qualitative research, all of the findings, and therefore the upcoming conclusive statements, relate solely toward the four participants in the current study and do not generalize to the population at large.

*SAHM Model*

As a result of the research, The "SAHM Model" (i.e., Stay-at-Home-Mother Model) emerged to describe the direction in which mothers who stay at home to raise their children proceed and is segmented into three developmental phases, each explaining potential obstacles and supportive factors.  This model is based upon qualitative research conducted with four stay-at-home-mothers.  By thoroughly examining their lives, upon which the formulation of such a theorized model systemically seeks to portray.  Although specific examples from participant

interviews are utilized to construct the model, and are intermittently used for illustration purposes, its overall generalized provisions can be applied to diverse groups of women who share different demographic characteristics.

The SAHM Model is broken down into three distinct stages which follow in sequential order, and subsequently build upon the issues dealt with in the preceding stages.  Stages I (i.e., Pre-SAHM) and II (i.e., SAHM Experience) rely upon the concrete examples that the women in the current study revealed throughout their interviews to depict elements of their lives.  However, stage III (i.e., Post-SAHM) is comprised with anticipation as the current participants envision their future lives.  They have yet to advance toward this final destination point as they all are presently in stage II. Impending quantitative research seeking to validate the SAHM Model with varied populations, including women whose lives fit within the realm of stage III and those of differing socio-economic statuses, ethnic backgrounds, and family situations will help test reliability and validity levels of this model, along with providing extensive and vivid examples to exemplify and enhance each stage.

*Stage I: Pre-SAHM*

For some women, the decision to become a SAHM is one whose roots can be traced back to a specific timeframe; the women in the current study may specifically remember their childhood dreams which perhaps included playing "house," in an attempt to capture and perfect the role of motherhood and looked forward to the episode in their lives when this fantasy would actually transpire. Alternately, these precise decision-making memories may have been recalled as the women grew into adolescence or in adulthood, when upon meeting their "significant other" such family planned conceptualizations seemed more tangible and imminent, as was the case with HP:

"…We had always planned once we had kids to stay home. When we bought our house we kept that in mind. We paid for it with one income…like everything that we've done, we always kept in mind…well we are going to have kids, can we do this on just one [*income*], so that's always been what we were going to do, if we could…we really hoped that we could and I don't know maybe if it came down to it we still couldn't afford it, I don't know what we would have done, moved to a smaller place or what we would have done, but I mean, we still would have done…"

Other mothers may not be able to isolate specific events or generalized periods of time in which they resolved to renounce their careers and stay at home to raise their children. This latter group of women may have, in fact, made a spontaneous decision to become SAHMs at the last stages of their pregnancies, or even after the births of their children. This was the case with a participant in the current study (i.e., FL). Perhaps SAHMs impulsively discovered that this route was financially feasible or unveiled the hearty impact this role would have upon their unborn or very young children. It is possible that a portion of mothers within this category may have been mentally preparing for their upcoming SAHM role within the depths of their subconscious minds, although the emergence into cognizant awareness may have ensued upon them later, when their pregnancies and/or the thrusts into early parenthood foretold the upcoming motherhood demands that would soon become their realities.

Regardless of their pre-cognitive determinations, the SAHM Model asserts that there are similar qualities that SAHMs share prior to becoming mothers. The results of this study revealed that each participant possessed "traditional" values, which are defined as those that adhere to conventional family roles (e.g., father as breadwinner; specified gender roles, etc.) that have been in existence throughout the decades and are in sharp contrast to the progressive, liberalized eras (e.g., the feminist movement). Each of the four women displayed value structures stemming from their early familial configurations, although the unique influences that inspired their traditional values themselves were varied. The SAHM Model assumes that their value structures

were instilled from such early influences, as opposed to developing them later in life, which

encouraged participants to undertake SAHM roles.  QT captures this point.  Although her

upbringing lacked a consistent father figure, she describes the impact her traditional SAHM had

upon her life:

"…I'm not quite sure how I would have…what life would have been like if I had to…if my mom wasn't there to receive us in the afternoons and kind of do this…the things that mothers do or fathers do when they are home in the afternoons.  So I don't know what it would have… She'd help us with our homework, she'd have dinner on the table and she was always cooking things…that kind of nice traditional sense of motherhood that isn't so prevalent these days…I felt secure.  Even as a kid of divorced parents I felt secure and that things were in want or anything."

Within the realm of "traditional values" demonstrated by the women in this study was a

sense of organized religiosity, although their collective spirituality was uniquely manifested,

ardently (i.e., RZ, QT), privately (i.e., FL) and apprehensively (i.e., HP).

Likewise, their personalities seemed to crave organization, evidenced by the ways in

which they structured their lives to ensure a sense of planned orderliness (e.g., activities for their

children, keeping abreast of household responsibilities).  Another possible explanation is that the

concept of "structure" had always been an overriding characteristic that prevailed within SAHMs

throughout their lives.

Similarities among the SAHMs spouses included sanctioning their wives SAHM roles, as

well as providing financial support.  Again, the SAHM asserts that these spousal factors

prevailed prior to motherhood and influenced the women's decisions to stay at home.  Thus, it

was a value for SAHM participants to choose partners who would share their traditional beliefs

and therefore, create a family whose ideals mirrored her own.  Future research will expand upon

the qualities specific to SAHMs, particularly in contrast to the shared commonalities among

working mothers.

*Stage II: SAHM Experience*

The second phase of the SAHM Model describes the actual state of affairs that takes place among mothers at home.  During this time, women are subjected to a wide range of events and emotions that contain both positive and negative undertones, which ultimately shape their SAHM experiences in terms of overall contentment levels (i.e., positive, neutral, negative).  This study revealed sustaining factors revolving around the same causal dynamics which originally inspired the participants to become SAHMs, as demonstrated in stage I, the Pre-SAHM stage (i.e., traditional values, personality factors, spousal influences).  Traditional values nourished mothers through difficult times by reassuring them that their current SAHM status was contributing to the greater good of their children, as QT succinctly confirms:

"…It pays off many of my friends tell me…get them when they are young…train them well when they are young and love them a lot and it pays off.  Let's hope.  Right?"

"…I guess children you know need security among many other things, but security and the sense that their home is the safest place, I think for them a place of nurture and a place where they can learn and use their minds and grow and be creative and stuff and someone…it's nice if someone is there with their head on straight and we all get frazzled, even as a stay at home mom…"

Additionally, the perceived and/or authentic emotional and financial support they received from their husbands helped facilitate comprehensive welfare levels.  Moreover, their preference for scheduled structure assisted with the desire to reach out and become involved with community events, as well as guaranteed their own hygienic maintenance.  The incorporation of structure certainly enabled the SAHMs to cope with, manage, and enjoy their experiences.  RZ offers insight into this phenomenon through the following passages:

Interviewer:    "Give me an example of your day…how you structure or do you structure…"

RZ:    "I can give you a timeline.  This is naptime.  Now they take good 3…they've been down since about 1:15 and it's almost 4:00.  So times I'll get a good 3 hours…depending on teething or whatnot.  [*Ann*] is my sleeping child and she will sleep until 8:30.  We have to go in and wake her up.  [*Steve*] wakes up at 6:30 or 7:00.  We call this our 4-bedroom apartment because the

closets are so big; the children sleep in the closets.  [*Steve*] will wake up and he will just kind of jum]p on the bed…mom…juice.  I make fresh juice for them in the morning, so he knows we go peel the fruit and we make fresh juice and get breakfast ready.  Then we wait and play out here so that mommy will have [*Steve*]  time until about 8:30 or 8:00 and then we'll get [*Ann*] up and then we'll all come eat breakfast …They play for a little bit and normally right after that, we are on the go.  So that is probably 9:30 we are usually out the door and we have the library on Monday, shopping on Tuesday…Wednesday we have playgroup, Thursday we have bible study and then Friday is a free for all…just fellowshipping with the certain women and so then we eat lunch about 12:30 and then they go down for a nap and sleep until 3:30-4:00.  They go to bed about 8:00 every night and then dad is usually home about 5-5:30…

"…I'm a scheduler and a planner.  My poor kids probably don't get to play enough."

"…Then developed some of the other things I was reading about children…play time and kind of structured our day and started going to the play groups, but thankfully mine were able to get on a schedule right away and napped at the same time right out of the chute, so mommy always had good 2 hour chunks…often I didn't get to read, but I did get to catch up on everything else…"

HP describes how the incorporation of a schedule increased her acclimation into

motherhood:

"…she [*Jasmine*] got on a schedule…that helped a lot.  You just feel like a little more control over what's happening…as much as you can.  Go down to bed a certain time and just that you…when 7:30-8:00 p.m. comes, she's in bed, no matter how bad the day is, she's asleep for the night and it just helps you gain a perspective…" "…But it's pretty regular.  We pretty much have the same…stick to the same schedule every day…"

Additionally, QT articulates the need for structure:

"…I had read several books on different parenting styles…one talks about structuring your child's time, allowing them to thrive creatively within that time and you as the parent determines, based on the child's needs of course, but even from the very beginning, we structured our time with [*Kelly*] …the point is that I started to build the structure into our schedule …we just believe in some degree of structure in the family because that is a good thing for kids, so we put that in place and I felt like…again, those things about work life where you structure  your day, doing something every minute of the day and you have to account for it and stuff…that was kind of spilling over into our family life…not that I had to account for every minute, but that there was a time for everything…It helps the parent.  It helps a lot to be structured because you kind of presume, you know what your child is going to need unless your kid is sick, of course we know the differences between work and home, you don't leave the house, you feel cooped up at times, that kind of thing, but in general the idea of structured environment, structured day…"

Traditional values indirectly (and possibly subconsciously) provided hindrances as well,

as the participants felt their maternal roles required them to stay at home. This conflicted with

the career paths they had been pursuing.  This requirement affected the adverse way in which

participants felt the community at large perceived their subservient roles.  RZ describes her

experience with this issue during the interview:

Interviewer:    "…What do you think are or is the consensus in this society or community about stay-at-home moms?  Either from the media or politically speaking and you have kind of a unique experience coming from two different locations.  I'm wondering if maybe there is a difference in how…"

RZ:      I think it's probably not looked highly upon and I think even my own pride…I'm often embarrassed to say…you have to think of the circles that I hang out with too.  There have been times when I'm in corporate situations with my husband, where the wives, but that's probably looking down on the fact that I stayed home and you must not be educated or you, there is that…"

With regard to personality issues, each mother's ability to sacrifice personal career

fulfillment directly correlated to a pronounced sense of unselfishness. Although such a trait (e.g.,

"unselfishness") is generally defined positively, and is certainly beneficial to surrounding people,

its self-sacrificing nature can be seen as an encumbrance to the SAHM herself, and with time

lead to overall weariness.  During the course of QT's interview, she describes this concept:

QT: "…you become a little selfless as a parent.  Because you've got children who are incredibly selfish who really know and believe to the bottom of their core that they are the center of the world and they are going to act on that.  They are just not going to think it, they are going to act on it and so you are having to train them, but at the same time take care of these needs…totally immediate.  My daughter who screamed, do you know why she was screaming?"

Interviewer:    "Why?"

QT: "Because she has a little stuffed animal up there and she was trying to wrap a towel around it and swaddle it, she screamed…like… 'I'm on fire!'  That's why she wanted me to go up there. She wanted me to go up there to wrap that stinking towel around her stuffed animal and for her…that thing…that task was so important. So you just become…you just let it go…any selfish desires you might have."

Interviewer:    "Is that easy?"

QT: "No way.  It's not at all…"

Additional personality elements that obstructed their contentment levels at home included derived amounts of energy; extroverted mothers seemed to feel confined at home, unable to intermingle amongst society, and thus created excuses to venture out of the home to seek interpersonal stimulation.  On the other hand, introverted mothers were not able to unearth enough solitary segregation from their demanding and draining children, or like FL, found it hard to depart into the community when it did not require her presence, as during the days in which she was employed:

FL:  [sic], I think just in some ways, I think you have to really, especially me, not force yourself, but you just have to remember to get out, and be in touch with other people.  And, and not stay in the house all day, that kind of thing.

Interviewer:  Is it tempting to stay in the house?

FL:  Sometimes it is for me.  I tend to stay where I'm comfortable…So I do tend to maybe stay in the house a little bit more, that kind of thing…So, I think, you know, it—it can be stressful to be in the, the house all day like that, but I think, you know, you have to remember, as I said to get out.

Although participants expressed overwhelming gratitude toward their husbands for enabling their SAHM role, there were periodic spousal criticisms sprinkled throughout the interviews, which marred their experiences.  In particular, there was joint frustration toward absent fathers, who were paradoxically bound to their offices in order to financially permit their wives to stay at home.  Demanding expectations and overall difficulties transitioning into parenthood were additional adjustment woes that some of the couples faced, as HP acknowledges:

"…something about [*research*] studies [*that she has read*]…the hardest time in a marriage is when you have kids.  That's the least…perhaps you were happy before and happy after and I can believe that."

*Stage III: Post-SAHM*

The final stage described within the SAHM model has yet to occur among the lives of each participant, and they provide tentative predictions to foretell what issues may arise in the proceeding years. Each participant is currently in Stage II of the SAHM Model; collectively their offspring are comprised of newborn infants and young children, placing the mothers in the throes of "SAHMhood" (i.e., stage II). Stage III is broken down into two parts. *Part one* of this suppositional stage states that upon exiting their SAHM statuses (i.e., as the children age and leave home), each woman will be positioned within a ranged vicinity whose scope stretches from positive to negative on a scale based upon overall contentment levels. A hypothesized example of a woman exiting stage II and into *part one* of stage III toward the positive end of the continuum would be a mother who was able to reap the benefits of the sustaining factors during her SAHM experience, somehow discounting the inevitable hindering factors. A woman who was unable to overlook such obstacles might exit stage II and into *part one* of stage III toward the lower point (i.e., "negative") of the continuum.

In *part two* of stage III, the woman has room for movement, as her eventual emergence into the world outside of her SAHM role will dictate her direction. If she feels that her family as a whole has benefited from her SAHM status, and if she simultaneously places high importance on her family's profitable gains, she will migrate toward the positive direction of the scale. HP touches on this issue as she looks toward the future to the day she returns to work:

"…When I go back to work…gosh I'm going to be starting pretty much close to the bottom again, but I'll tell you what, I don't…I don't know which direction I'll go in there… We'll see what happens. But I mean [*as opposed to*] someone who stayed working. I'm investing time in something…it [*working*] doesn't equal anything in the end as far as with your family it does, but like when you go if you are looking at a career…"

In *part two* of stage III of the SAHM Model, if the mother believes that her family benefited by her staying at home to raise the children, but she did not gain satisfaction from this facet or dwelled on her own needs (e.g., a loss of career, weariness levels), she migrates toward the negative direction of the continuum.  HP describes tribulations women in this category may face:

"That's [*the SAHM job*] not recognized. That's never going to be recognized…I don't think.  It certainly is true, but someone who's been in an office for 40 years trying to hire you… 'what have you been doing, and what else have you been doing'…do you know what I mean?  They just don't…I just don't think it's valued in the workplace…I don't think he's [*the hiring supervisor]* going to say ... 'oh great you took 20 or 18 years off to raise your kid, that's great'…I don't think they are going to say… 'A+ for you.' They are going to say… 'okay, it's not going to count in the work world. It's not going to be credit for anything.'

An average score will be attained given the two components in stage III, *part one* combined with *part two*.  A woman whose overall experience throughout the two parts in stage III remains constant will maintain an unswerving score, which is at the same level obtained at the offset of level II.  This score, which will undoubtedly vary among each SAHM, represents the *projected outcome* of her SAHM experience.  Interestingly, the finality of such score may be in constant flux because each mother may continually redefine (and thus, "rescore") the contentment level she obtained.
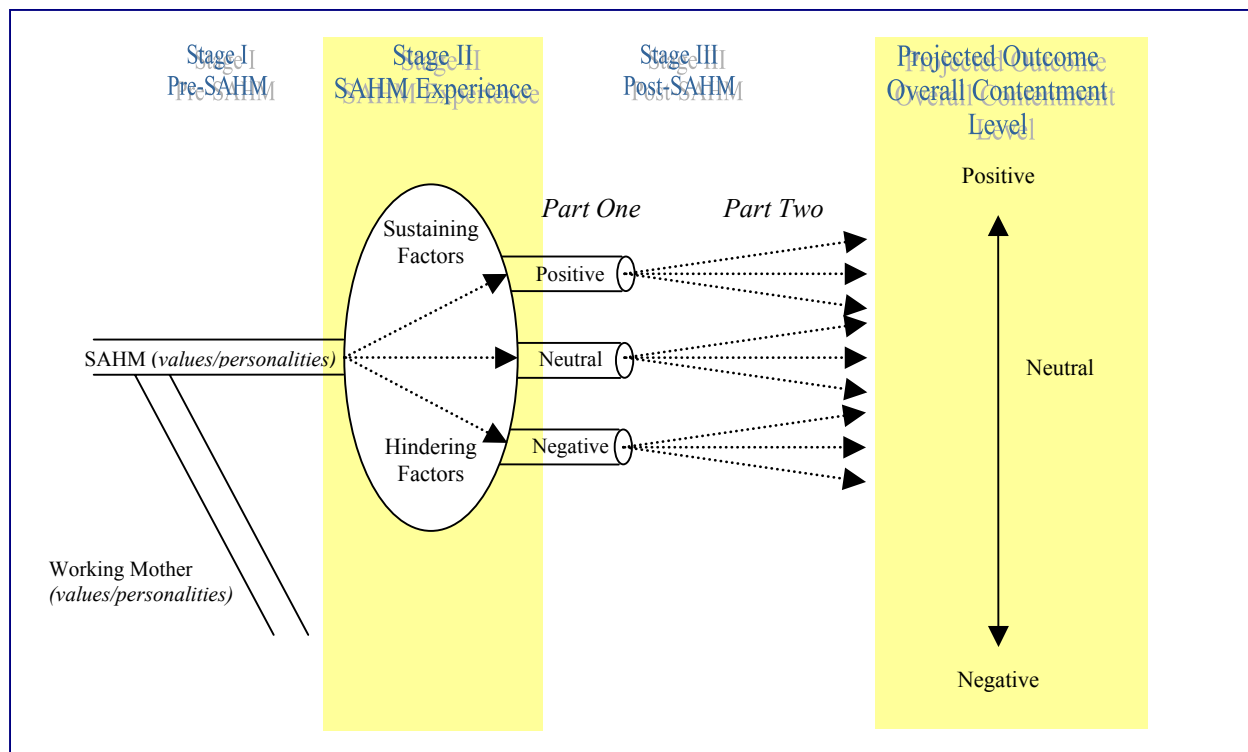
**Figure 4 SAHM Model**


*SAHM Portraits*

      The following divergent analyses (i.e., Portraits I & II) seek to accurately describe the

overall "SAHMs essence" by providing two innovative viewpoints toward her function in life.

The former interpretation (i.e., "Portrait I") implies that the skills, knowledge and proficiency

professional women transport into their SAHM roles simulate the related duties that took place in

accordance with their former workplaces; this precisely describes the set of circumstances

involved with the four women in the current study.  The subsequent interpretation (i.e., "Portrait

II") requires the substantiation of future research, but suggests that perhaps women experience

similar psychological disruptions as those undergoing retirement.  The purpose of the following

two portraits are to illustrate the emerging theoretical tenants of the current study, as well as to

comprehensively describe factors which affect SAHMhood; they provide supplemental information that will ultimately enhance the SAHM Model.

*Portrait I: SAHM and the Working Mother*

Publicized messages advocating the role of SAHMhood are generated from "pop" psychology articles, media references, and cultural adages which convey that motherhood is the "most important job in the world"; however, in such instances, the term *job* is utilized with ambiguity. Does this axiom imply that being a mother is, indeed, "employment" in an official sense? If so, what parameters define the concept of employment? To embark upon one's livelihood outside of the home surely is one form of employment, compromised of explicit work-related parameters such as transporting oneself to and from an outside locale, performing job tasks received from supervising authorities, and the retrieval of a paycheck. Different forms of employment with clearly defined "rules" certainly exist, and include those where the employees work from the confines of their household, or where they own their own businesses, thus determining individualized work expectations and assignments while doling out self-made financial rewards (i.e., paychecks).

Those who perform job duties within the home, such as those with caretaking responsibilities and household chores (e.g., SAHMs, housewives, au pair's) are understood as engaging in "work," although within the household context, this concept lacks specificity. For example, Hochschild (1989) has identified "the second shift" to which women endure, indicating that they typically engage in two jobs (i.e., their "real" 9:00-5:00 jobs, and their "household" jobs). Does the latter, (e.g., household jobs) really constitute traditional employment? If this were currently the case, then one would not expect SAHMs in the present study to feel that upon re-entering the job market, they would have to start out at the bottom of the vocational rung.

Moreover, they would not consider their returns as "*re*-entrances" into the career market, but merely transitioning into a different field. Perhaps pre-existing notions presented in references such as "the second shift" were in place to suggest that the performance of household duties, although demanding and unfairly distributed, are not literally defined as formalized employment. Regardless of such preceding literary interpretations, the women in the current study consciously or subconsciously structured their SAHMhood positions as if they were, indeed, formal "jobs." This finding should incite changes in our understanding of SAHMhood, and the semantics in our current repertoires which define transitioning from motherhood (i.e., both home-based and working) "roles" to that of "jobs."

As described in previous sections, the four participants in the current study repositioned their scheduled, regulated, and formatted work habits into the home, and attempted to interact with their children by way of rote precision. This strategy was utilized in lieu of "warm and fuzzy" stereotypical nurturing exchanges, in which "motherese" tones and demonstrative affect were disregarded and replaced with an attitude of "taking care of business," (i.e., the children's needs) in a very literal sense, with the efficiency and competency that doubtlessly defined their employed selves. Hence, this study indicates that SAHMhood is a dutiful job to be conducted, versus a natural extension of the mothers. Indeed, upon reviewing the "family code trees" that guided the research direction by providing a skeletal outline, none of the broad categories, or subcategories contained "nurturing" topics such as "love," or "care," etc. Rather, examples of the code categories included subject headings such as "Early Influences," "Personality," "Career Development," "Negative Reactions," and "Hard to Adjust." This new mental approach toward SAHMhood alters our understanding and the consequent linguistic reformulations, behavioral expectations and experiences will naturally ensue.

*Portrait II: SAHM and Retirement Issues*

An alternate scenario suggests that professional women who leave behind their working identities to stay home and raise their children may face similar emotional and identity issues as those encountering retirement. While Selye (1993) claims that "most people, be they chartered accountants, short-order cooks, or surgeons—consider their own occupation the most stressful," he also discusses the positive accomplishments derived from employment, including feelings of self worth, status, and the sense of contributing to the welfare of society. At the onset of retirement, these significant benefits subside and, the concept of "stress," which is amorphously defined, may emerge due to higher rates of physical and emotional inertia. Future SAHM research should encompass this issue from such a standpoint; do SAHMs, who depart from their formalized workforces, adopt the negative characteristics akin to those who are unwaged (e.g., unemployed, retired), and if so, in what capacity?

### Concluding Thoughts

The current research has carefully investigated the lives of four SAHMs, by exposing the issues that they continually experience firsthand. The findings in this study focus on the demanding role of the SAHM mother herself. The concentration is exclusively attentive toward her rewards and sources of pleasure, as well as her obstacles, frustrations, and/or the mundane routine brought about by staying home with the children in lieu of fulltime employment. Although surrounding factors (e.g., spousal dynamic, children, former work environments) are considered in order to examine the SAHMs lifestyle, they are done so in a way that does not divert attention away from her mothering role and onto various family members and/or situations, but to enhance our understanding of her current issues, thereby providing a comprehensive portrait of the SAHM.

Because the *sine qua non* of this study examines the world through the perspective of the SAHM, the current research provides a unique outlook toward family dynamics.  The welfare and/or detriment of the children and spouses are touched upon only in relation to how the SAHM assimilates to their experiences.  This sharply contrasts existing literature which tends to focus on various family dynamics, relationships, and experiences with the sole exclusion of the SAHM role.  Current research studies that include the experiences of SAHMhood tend to do so in distinction from the "actual" research participants (e.g., working mothers, children, spouses, etc.) by pointing out the divergent roles and experiences such individuals have in contrast to their SAHM counterparts.  In other words, previous to this study, SAHMs were examined only to assess how remaining family members adjusted to and/or benefited from her specific positioning.

*Implications*

Based upon the above, professional therapists (e.g., counselors, social workers, psychologists, etc) who work with families and purposefully immerse themselves in research to maintain current and changing social trends, should be aware of stay-at-home dynamics that potential clients may be experiencing.  It is doubtful that SAHMs will become obsolete.  Of the families in existence who possess traditional values combined with financial feasibility, there will always remain a certain (fluctuating) percentage of people who value and practice the SAHM role.  Therefore, counselors should be prepared to work with the identity and familial related issues that SAHMs face amongst a society that finds their roles antiquated.  Not only will increased professional journals benefit those employed in therapeutic professions, but access to "popular articles" on behalf of society as a whole can result from this expansion, thus alleviating misunderstandings, and producing acknowledgement toward the role of current and future SAHMs.

Perhaps this research can also help future mothers determine their upcoming roles; probing whether they want to become SAHMs, or resume their employed positions may not be an excruciating decision, as more resources would be readily available.  Upon investigation, expectant mothers can obtain accurate portrayals of the four women in the current study, by vicariously and realistically familiarizing themselves with what staying at home may entail.

Likewise, the current dissertation can embrace those who are amidst the throes of SAHMhood.  Although all four of the women in this study, along with their spouses, highly regarded the concept of staying at home to raise children, they unanimously felt some form of disdain manifested toward their domesticity roles.  The origination of such condescension is unknown; one question to ponder includes, do media influences (e.g., books, journals, movies, etc.) affect the widespread standards and opinions of the community, or do media influences merely reflect the people's principles to which they target? Quite possibly the two (i.e., media, public) interact in a circular fashion, and therefore changing one sphere will eventually affect the other.  Operating from such a theory, it is hoped that this dissertation will spawn future studies within the SAHM realm, and eventually affect such "change" within the research arena, thus generating the paradigm shift to encourage mutual respect between SAHM and her surroundings, both from a "grand" scale (e.g., the community, media references) as well as within her family unit.

Most importantly, I feel that the concept of SAHMhood is not a precise phenomenon that can be understood from a linear framework.  Quite the contrary, the experience of SAHMing is multifaceted and visceral, and therefore should be acknowledged for its mysterious complexities; hence, the creation of the SAHM Model was designed to depict such elaborative intricacies. Although it sets specific parameters (i.e., Stage I, Stage II, Stage III) to guide the SAHMs

experience, its design allows SAHMs to move throughout their unique and individualized routes with variance. It would be advantageous for the SAHM Model to be applied toward various populations that extend past the demographics utilized in the current study (e.g., age, socioeconomic status, religion, ethnicity, locale, etc.), even including the experience of stay-at-home-fathers, as well as employing different research methodologies (i.e., both qualitative and quantitative).

*Personal Discoveries*

The goal of personally disclosing the learning experiences that I underwent, as interviewer and researcher, is intended to anticipate the meaningful experiences other readers will endure. In particular, I chose this subject matter because I felt passionate about the impending issues of women whose lives I would soon embark upon; I knew that it would be likely that their SAHM roles were ones they chose based upon their value structures, and projected that at worse, my subjects would feel misunderstood and misrepresented while missing the mental stimulation and/or statuses that had resulted from their working days. However, I thought that their decisions to become SAHMs would override such barriers, thus allowing them to bask in the positive elements that they derived by watching their children learn and grow, as well as feeling proud of their direct SAHM contributions, thereby superceding overall negativity levels.

As this research is coming to a close, I can reflect upon my earlier assumptions with trepidation, as I exit this project with a different understanding of SAHMs. In particular, I now understand that although the SAHM value and the SAHM experience are correlated, there is not a direct correspondence between the two entities; a woman may yearn to stay at home with her children, based upon her value system and current family standing (e.g., spousal support,

financial wellbeing), even though this desire does not dictate a happy and rewarding experience. Her value and subsequent decision to stay at home may, in fact, be detrimental, as she might feel obligated to do so despite her misery, which may even affect her emotional health.  Quite the contrary, a woman may reluctantly feel compelled to stay at home, due to the expectations contained within her value structure, and have a surprisingly pleasant experience.

I would not have endured heartfelt insight toward the lives of my participants without experientially immersing myself in this research assignment; I hope that the vivid case analyses and observations, followed by the SAHM Model appropriately and texturally brought about awareness toward the four women's realities.  I hope this study will enhance our knowledge regarding SAHMs, while extending appropriate regard, support, and interest toward their multifaceted experiences.  I feel personally enlightened, and believe that my former "Pollyanna-ish" attitude toward SAHMs entailed "a primarily positive experience navigated by a nurturing mother" has soberly been replaced by a more reality-based and graphic conception.  I am certain that conducting the current study will impact my life in many ways.  Not only will the implications of my findings positively impact my future work as a practicing counselor and upcoming researcher, but will assist with personal, family-oriented choices and behaviors.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Applicant Screen

The following script is intended to screen the eligibility of prospective dissertation participants,

and will be utilized via telephone:

> "Hello, my name is Cindy Vejar, and I am a doctoral student at The Virginia
> Tech/Northern Virginia Center.  Thank you for responding to my advertisement.
> Although I listed demographic criteria on the flyer that you initially reviewed, would you
> mind if I asked a few personal questions related to my study?"

1. "How old are you?"

2. "Which college/university did you attend? What is the highest degree you have
   obtained?"

3. "Are you married? Do you and your husband live together?"

4. "How many children do you have?"

5. "When did you become a fulltime mother?"

6. "Where were you employed prior to becoming a fulltime mother?"

7. "Do you live in an apartment, a townhouse, condominium, or private home?" *(This
   question will be asked to loosely assess the delicate topic of familial household
   income)*.

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Title of the Current Study: A Qualitative Approach toward Understanding the Transition from Career to Fulltime Motherhood.

Investigator: Cynthia M. Vejar

I.  Purpose of this Project:

To uncover the demands and realities that fulltime mothers endure, which will be examined from a grounded theoretical perspective.

II.  Procedures:

Personal, individualized interviews with the fulltime mother on a one-time basis.  The complete interview will be audio-taped.  Upon transcription of the interview session, the tapes will be destroyed.

A mailed interview transcript will be mailed to the participant's home to verify the accuracy of the interview.

Both the interview and observation will take place in the participant's home at a convenient time.

III.  Risks/Benefits Involved with this Project:

The benefits include contributing to an existing knowledge of research revolving around fulltime mothers.  This benefit may affect future and current fulltime mothers, as well as counseling professionals, and the community at large.

Personal benefits derived from participation in this study include an outlet for which participants can express the triumphs and hardships that have accumulated throughout the years.

Although insight-oriented research may indirectly affect familial dynamics, there are no imminent risks involved with the current study.

IV.  Confidentiality:

All information that will be disclosed during the course of each interview and/or observation will remain confidential.  For purposes of educational advancement, the researcher may play the taped sessions for fellow colleagues and research supervisors, with the intent of achieving feedback that will guide the research.  Names and identifiable situations will be changed and/or modified to protect privacy.

V.  <u>Freedom to Withdraw</u>:

If, at any time participants feel they are being misrepresented, mistreated or if extenuating life circumstances come about during the course of the research, participants are fully able to withdraw from the current study.

VI.  <u>Approval of Research</u>:
This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, by the Department of Education.

VII.  <u>Participants Permission</u>:

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project.  I have had all my questions answered.  I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.

_____

 Signature                                         Date

Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I may contact:

___Cynthia M. Vejar____  ___(703) 204-8157____
 Investigator  Phone

___Octavia Madison-Colmore  ___(703) 538-8483
 Virginia Tech Faculty      Phone
 Faculty Advisor

IRB Review Date: 10/12/2002

**VITA**

Cynthia M. Vejar, Ph.D.

3285 Laneview Pl.
Herndon, VA  20171
Email Address: cvejar@vt.edu

**EDUCATION**

| | |
|---|---|
| 2003 | Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University |
| | Doctorate of Philosophy: Counselor Education |

1997        Marymount University
            Master of Arts: School Guidance Counseling

1996        Marymount University
            Master of Arts: Counseling Psychology

1995        George Mason UniversityBachelor of Arts: Psychology

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

2002-Present    The George Washington University
                Clinical Supervisor
                Work with Master's level students who are embarking upon their first
                clinical internships.

2001-Present    Luther Jackson Middle School
                ISP Counselor
                Work with students who are placed in a segregated program, due to
                chronic disruptions and/or violent behavior.  I meet with them individually
                to develop prosocial goals and behavioral plans, along with meeting for
                group counseling sessions on a daily basis, which enhances their social,
                behavioral, and developmental progress.

2000-2001       Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
                Graduate Assistant
                Taught graduate level classes, provided clinical supervision to Master's
                level students, and assisted professors with research and academic related
                issues.

| 1999-2000 | Northern Virginia Family Service<br>Anger Management Counselor<br>Provided middle school students with appropriate communication and relationship skills.  Counseled students upon referral individually and in a group environment to help them with conflict resolution, decision-making, anger management, and individual development.  Students learned how to interact with others and explored their own values and evaluated their behavior. |
|---|---|
| 1997- 1999 | Strayer University<br>Career Counselor<br>Individually counseled students in regards to their job search process; acted as a liaison between student and prospective employer; conducted workshops that dealt with issues such as interviewing skills, resume writing, and networking techniques; assisted numerous career fairs and workshops; developed a working relationship between myself and various organizations and acquainted students with such companies; informed students of new job openings; administered skill and personality assessments. |

## INTERNSHIPS

| 2001 | Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University<br>School Counseling Professor |
|---|---|
| 2001 | Hospice of Northern Virginia<br>Grief and Bereavement Counselor |
| 1997 | Lake Braddock Secondary School<br>School Counselor |
| 1996-1997 | Northern Virginia Community College<br>Personal and Career Counselor |

## VOLUNTEER WORK

| Present | Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America |
|---|---|
| Present | FCPS Mentor |
| 1999 | The Lamb Center; Vienna, VA |
| 1994 | The Women's Center |