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UMI
HIGH-ACHIEVING MOTHERS: 
AN EXPLORATION OF NURTURING 
AND ACHIEVING ROLES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for 
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate 
School of The Ohio State University

By
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*****
The Ohio State University
2001

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ABSTRACT

Despite a relatively recent surge in the theoretical literature about women's development (Belenky, et al., 1986; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Josselson, 1987, 1996; Gilligan, 1982), there is still much to be learned. This study examines women's experiences in several aspects of their lives—gender, career, and family. It also explores how these experiences impact and are affected by identity development.

This research was a qualitative study of ten "high-achieving mothers". Women selected as participants possessed or were in the process of attaining an M.D. or Ph.D. They were also married and had at least one biological child from that marriage under the age of five years. The sample represents a diverse group of women in terms of educational and occupational fields, age (26 to 38 years), and race/ethnicity (African-American, Hispanic, Indian, and White). Participants were interviewed to explore how they make meaning of gender, career, and family
roles, as well as how these meanings impact their life decisions and roles, identity development, and life satisfaction.

Data were analyzed through the constant comparative method. Findings are presented in four major categories: constructions of Self, nature of roles, tension, and alignment. Each category is discussed in-depth with special attention to patterns and themes that emerged from the data.

The research reveals marked complexity role construction and patterns, influenced by both internal and external factors. Degrees, sources, and manifestations of tension experienced by these women in their dual roles, as well as their strategies they utilize to deal with these issues, are closely examined. Overall, it appears that for these women, family roles and responsibilities continue to be a major factor in their identity and career development. Implications for the women of this study, professional women and mothers in general, the professions, and future research are discussed.
For Grace.
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I am very thankful for my dissertation committee: Dr. Bob Rodgers, Dr. Susan Jones, and Dr. Peter Demerath. The time and energy they put into my research was very much appreciated. A special thanks to Bob, my adviser and friend, for his wisdom, support, and confidence in me. And to Peter, for once telling me to "keep the faith" during a difficult time.

I am eternally grateful to the women of this study who took the time out of their already busy lives to talk with me. Through laughter and tears, they shared with me the intimate joys and struggles of their lives. I consider my short time with them a gift; I learned from them not only as a researcher, but also as a woman.

I could not have done this without my family and friends, especially Mark, my cheerleader and the ultimate "Integrator". And finally, to Gracie, who gives me more strength than she will ever know.
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FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field of Study: Education

Emphasis: Higher Education and Student Affairs
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The study of women's adult development is central to a psychology of women. Despite a relatively recent surge in the theoretical literature about women's development (Belenky, et al., 1986; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Josselson, 1987, 1996; Gilligan, 1982), there is still much to be learned. Theories are revised and new theories emerge out of a commitment to women's issues and through intensive research on women's experiences. This study reflects my own commitment to women's issues in adulthood. It examines women's experiences in several aspects of their lives--gender, career, and family--and how these experiences impact and are affected by identity development.

Contexts as Motivations for the Study

Four contexts provide the motivation for this study:

1) recent research and theory on women's development
require constant re-examination in lieu of the ever-changing cultural, political, economical, and social contexts of women's lives; 2) I am troubled by the continued use of the categories of "traditional" and "non-traditional" in research and everyday language that fail to describe the complexity of women's life choices and patterns; 3) The growing number of women earning advanced educational degrees and entering traditionally male occupations in the United States is promising. Despite these gains, women remain primarily responsible for the maintenance of a home and family (Betz, 1993; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; DiBenedetto & Tittle, 1990; Kinnier, Katz & Berry, 1991). How do women with advanced degrees negotiate their career aspirations and family commitments? How do highly educated women experience role choice? Do they experience role overload? These questions are understudied; yet, they are critical to an understanding of women's development; and 4) as an adult woman in the midst of doctoral work and family planning, I am engaged in a difficult process of defining and making choices regarding career and family roles. As a result, I am drawn to dialogues with women facing similar issues. Each of these contexts will be described further.
The past 25 years have witnessed significant changes in the lives of women. The myriad of social and cultural changes in the past two decades has had a profound effect on the experiences of women. Family structures are changing as divorce and remarriage become common occurrences, and the use of reproductive technology becomes a part of our everyday lives. More than 50 percent of all American women are now in the labor force—and the figure is rising. Over the past two decades, more women have entered elite occupations and have long-term careers. Women's growing engagement in work both contributes to, and stems from, significant changes in women's identity. It also complicates the historically clear-cut definitions between gender roles, career and family responsibilities and aspirations, and the overall meaning women make of their choices and their lives.

The past 15 years have also witnessed a growth in the research and literature regarding women's development. The works of Carol Gilligan (1982), Mary Belenky and others (1986), and Ruthellen Josselson (1987, 1996) describe development based upon women's experience and challenge the applicability of male-centered development theories to the lives of women. They also create invaluable frameworks for
understanding women's moral, ego, and identity development. Although this body of literature contributes significantly to the understanding of women's lives, we must engage in constant re-evaluation of these theories within ever-changing contexts of women's experiences. Developmental issues and dynamics defined by existing psychosocial theories are constantly confounded by major changes in family structure and economics, new social and professional roles and expectations, and the pressure associated with redefining lifelong values and perceptions (Patricia, et al, 1987). Thus, such dramatic fluctuations in society and women's experiences necessitate a re-examination of these theories and their definitions, outcomes, and assumptions. This study seeks to do so.

Secondly, today's women are often categorized as being "traditional" or "non-traditional" (e.g. Levinson, 1996). But what do these terms mean? What meaning do they have in a post-modern world? How far back does the "tradition" stem? To whose culture are we referring? Many studies of women's career development have utilized the traditional/nontraditional distinction as the dependent variable (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). The inadequacy of this distinction to describe women's lives has been amply noted
(Osipow, 1983). For example, a woman pursuing a "traditionally female" occupation such as an elementary school teacher may be as strongly career-oriented as a woman pursuing a career in a "nontraditional" field (i.e., law). Likewise, women in "nontraditional" occupations (i.e., science) differ greatly from each other in the extent to which family and marriage are salient to their life plans (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 21). Critical theorists might say that the monikers are used to subjugate women, where traditional/married/homemaker equals normal, and a non-traditional/non-married/professional equals abnormal. Others may say that it is a rather innocuous way to organize and understand the various life patterns of women. Regardless, I do not fit into either of these categories; I assume that this is the case for many women in my generation. Many women engage in processes of negotiating their many roles in a way that is not only different from men (Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1987, 1996), but also in a way that may change over time. Women define themselves in rather complicated ways, balancing a multiplicity of meanings, roles, involvements, and aspirations. We need a new language to discuss these phenomena.
Thirdly, research suggests that the number of women obtaining advanced educational degrees is on the rise. During the period from 1960 to 1979, women’s share of degrees increased from 32 to 49% at the Master’s level, and from 10 to 28% at the doctoral level (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Education is a major route to women’s career achievements and success, as well as improving the status of women in general. One must recognize, however, the continued centrality, whether socially constructed or biologically dictated, of home and family in women’s lives. This creates complex patterns of career development for women that are different from men, which include abandoning the career track, maintaining a stable career path, combining work and family roles, interrupted career patterns, and unstable career patterns level (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Little research addresses how women, especially those with advanced degrees, choose and make sense of their roles and life patterns.

Finally, this study stems from personal struggles with defining my own roles as an aspiring academic and new mother. Professional women are expected to be committed to their work at the same time as they are required to give priority to their family. Despite egalitarian attitudes
regarding the education of women, society still sanctions the assignment of homemaking and childcare to women, which may limit career development and attainment. Therefore, difficult choices still must be made, often between family and career, or potential role overload in the combination of both. I am confident that my dilemma is not unique; thus, I seek the wisdom and experience of other women who face these issues.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study is an attempt to address these issues through an in-depth exploration of the life patterns of ten high-achieving women who are also mothers. The participants represent a diverse group of women in terms of race/ethnicity (Indian, Hispanic, White, and Black) and age (26-38 years). Nine of the women possess, or are in the process of obtaining, doctoral or medical degrees in a variety of fields. One woman has an M.B.A. and some work experience. These women also have at least one biological child under the age of six and will have since made the decision to terminate their full/part-time outside employment for full-time child-rearing, or have made the decision to return to or maintain their full/part-time outside employment with other childcare arrangements. The
goal of this exploration is to better understand how these women make meaning of gender, career, and family roles, as well as how these meanings impact their life decisions and roles, identity development, and life satisfaction. This focus stems from my personal and scholarly interests in the intersections of gender, women’s development, life patterns, and the well-being of women.

Research Questions

Given the purpose of this inquiry, the following questions will guide this study:

1) How were the achieving and nurturing roles developed and constructed?

2) How do high-achieving mothers live out their roles?

3) How does the nature of these patterns impact a woman’s life satisfaction, identity, and self-esteem?

4) What is the significance of gender in these women’s lives?

Significance of study

This inquiry is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it will contribute to the general awareness of women’s issues based upon the experiences of women, not men. Our knowledge about women is distorted when decades of research on white men are generalized to all women.
(e.g., Kohlberg, 1958; Levinson, 1978; Perry, 1970). Intensively studying women’s lives and aspects of family, career, and gender advances the understanding of the complexity of women’s choices, life patterns, identity, satisfaction, and well-being.

Secondly, this research extends the literature and expands the knowledge base that can inform organization development, consulting, counseling, staff development, and education. As service practitioners, we often look to the adult development literature for ideas and guidance in practice. We use the literature to (a) help set our goals for the learning process, (b) to address developmental tasks and issues of adulthood, and (c) to plan how we should teach and guide, using the experiences of the participants as an integral part of the learning process (Caffarella, 1996). Therefore, if we expand the knowledge base and understanding of women’s issues in development, women may be served more effectively in a variety of practice settings.

Finally, this study has personal meaningfulness and significance. This project stems from both scholarly and personal interests, which are often difficult to separate. As a young professional woman of childbearing age I, too,
wrestle with the meanings of gender, career, and family in my own life. Although this may be seen as "researcher bias" and a weakness of the study, my own location within my topic affords me a unique insight into my participants' experiences. It also creates a relationship of reciprocity, between myself and the women I study, of mutual sharing and learning. Therefore, not only will I contribute to the extant literature on women’s development through my research; I will also reap personal benefits by learning from the wisdom and experiences of the women I study.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This study explores the experiences, life choices, and identity and career development of a group of ten high-achieving mothers. The extant literature on women both inspires and informs this research project. A review of the literature is useful in outlining a framework for this research; furthermore, it provides an account of the theoretical knowledge, and thus, biases that I bring to this study. I hope that my understanding of the literature will inform further theory development, not drive or control it. Therefore, I will describe in this chapter what I know, so that I can more effectively monitor how it influences my interactions with the women I seek to understand. I will also dialogue with the literature throughout the data collection, data analysis, and writing process.
Perspectives on Women’s Development

The adult development literature is concerned with the specific content areas of life that preoccupy individuals in their process of growth and development (Rodgers, 1980). The majority of psychosocial theory has been developed based upon the content areas of men’s lives; hence, theory has defined healthy identity in terms of the dominant western cultural norms of achievement, individualism, self-determination, mastery, and personal success (Spence, 1985). These theories have then been generalized, inappropriately, to the lives of women (Gilligan, 1982).

Carol Gilligan (1982) argues that hallmark theories of human development, including those of Sigmund Freud (1933/1974), Jean Piaget (1932), Erik Erikson (1968), Lawrence Kohlberg (1958), and Daniel Levinson (1978) are deficient when they are used to describe women’s development and experiences. Many theorists, such as Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan (1982), argue that women are conditioned, and therefore develop, very differently from men. Family and work roles, which are the focus of this study, are two such areas that women negotiate throughout their development in a way that may be significantly different from men. Traditional theories are unable to
encapsulate the complexity of women’s lives and often devalue women’s unique experiences (Enns, 1991).

For example, Freud (1933/1974) admitted that he did not understand women well; yet, he postulated that female development was an aberration from the normal, ideal model of male development (Enns, 1991). Furthermore, Erikson (1968) theorized that a young adult woman does not resolve issues of occupational and ideological commitment, but instead defines her identity through the “selective nature of her search for a man” (p. 283). Although each of these theories provides valuable frameworks to researchers and counselors, they also limit our perspectives and understanding of the lives of women.

Lehman (1986) notes that theories that are fully applicable to women “must be clinically useful, encompass the diversity and complexity of women’s lives, arise from women’s experience and view that experience positively, and recognize the inextricable connection between internal psychological worlds and external social realities” (Enns, 1991, p. 209). Toward this goal, identity models that feature the relational strengths of women have emerged (i.e. Belenky, et. al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1987, 1996). Authors of these models attempt to correct
the inadequacies of mainstream theories by focusing on how women engage in a unique process of making meaning of, choosing, and evaluating the content areas of their lives. What follows is a review of influential perspectives of women's development, with an emphasis on how they provide an understanding of the research questions at hand.

Rarely is an issue in development so straightforward that one theoretical perspective can adequately explain it. Several perspectives used in combination can be quite helpful in understanding the complexity of women's experiences and identity development. The primary purpose of this chapter is to review some of the major theories within the behavioral, psychosocial, and cognitive-structural frameworks of women's development. Next, the concept of motherhood is discussed. Research on gender-role ideology and sex-role attitudes, as they pertain to women's life choices, will also be reviewed. Finally, existing literature on multiple roles and women will be examined. The result, as it will be seen, is a wider lens through which to view women's identity development that has both theoretical and practical implications for working with college women.
The Behavioral Approach

The behavioral approach to women’s identity focuses on how we respond to the environment and how the environment influences our choices and development. Behavioral theories of women’s development involve an attempt to explain and predict life patterns based upon existing environmental barriers and facilitators (Baruch, Barnett, & Rivers, 1983; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). They also describe the results of life choices and patterns, such as adjustment, satisfaction, and success (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Finally, behavioral theories examine other outcomes of life choices and patterns such as mental well-being and physical health (Baruch, Barnett, & Rivers, 1983). This review of the behavioral approach to women’s identity development will focus mainly on the works of Nancy Betz and Baruch, Barnett and Rivers. I will also include the findings of several studies that explicate more fully the behavioral approach.

The Psychosocial Approach

The psychosocial approach examines the content of development—the important issues women face as their lives progress—such as how to define themselves, their relationships with others, and what to do with their lives
(Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). According to this approach, not all issues are equally important throughout life; some are age-linked in sequential stages where developmental tasks must be resolved. Each new stage occurs when internal biological and psychological changes and environmental demands join forces to press for the resolution of new issues (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Rodgers, 1980). The psychosocial approach is related to identity development in that how women resolve each set of tasks influences how they view themselves and their place in the environment. An optimal balance of appropriate challenge and support facilitates crisis resolution at each stage, as well as overall development (Sanford, 1966). Successful resolution often involves the development of new skills and attitudes; unsuccessful resolution leads to stress, negative self-image, and problems with future developmental tasks/crises (Rodgers, 1980).

In essence, psychosocial theories are helpful in understanding the issues these ten women face at various points in their lives. Although the focus of this approach is not behavioral per se, it does recognize that what issues arise, the order in which they are experienced. Their relative importance in a person's life and resolution
are strongly influenced by society, culture, and gender (Erikson, 1959). I will focus this discussion on the psychosocial theories of Ruthellen Josselson, Daniel Levinson, and Gail Sheehy.

The Cognitive-Structural Approach

Theories that focus on how women think, reason, and make meaning of their experiences are part of the cognitive-structural approach. According to these theories, the mind has structures, or sets of assumptions, by which persons perceive, adapt to, and organize their environments and experiences. Cognitive structures are ways of thinking, taking in, filing, organizing, and judging the content of our lives. At each stage, these structures represent the underlying thought organization across content.

Most concepts in the cognitive-structural theories stem from Piaget's (1952) early work where stages, or positions, are the organizing structures that represent qualitatively different modes of thinking and meaning-making. Change concepts include equilibration, assimilation, accommodation, horizontal decalage, vertical decalage, cognitive conflict, cognitive restructuring. Changes in thinking take place after an experience of
cognitive conflict and as the result of accommodation processes. Assimilation is the process of integrating new information into existing structures. Accommodation is the process of modifying existing structures or creating new structures to incorporate ways of constructing meaning that will not fit into existing structures. When equilibrium is achieved one is able to make meaning of interactions with environmental demands in more complex ways. Finally, hierarchical integration is the process of development where new ways of thinking involve increasing differentiation and integration of structures at lower stages. I will focus this discussion on the more recent cognitive-structural literature, with particular emphasis on Carol Gilligan and Belenky, et al.

Behavioral Theories

Introduction

Career and family roles are important issues in women’s identity development—how they play a part in women’s lives both reflect and influence their identity development. There appears to be a clear trend toward women’s employment and achievements outside the home. Today, homemaking is no longer a permanent, full-time occupation for most women (Levinson, 1996). Each
successive generation of women has participated in the labor force at a higher rate than its predecessor (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983; Giele, 1982). Overall, the percentage of working women has increased three-fold since 1940, while the percentage of working mothers has increased ten-fold (Betz, 1993). In the 1990 census, almost 80% of women reported working outside the home; 62% of those women had children under age six. These statistics show that not only will most women work outside the home, but also that the majority of women will combine career and family pursuits in their lives (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983).

The specific factors leading a woman to work inside or outside the home are varied and have changed over the past century. The behavioral approach to understanding this phenomenon looks at the external circumstances that facilitate women’s decisions to enter or not enter the work force. Furthermore, they explain why women are overrepresented in the lowest paid, lowest status fields and what barriers exist that cause this. They also examine why women consistently underutilize their abilities in their careers. I will briefly discuss each of these phenomena and their potential causes and consequences to women’s identity development as described by behavioral
theorists in more detail. In Chapter 5, each section will
be re-explored in light of the data collected from the
participants of this study.

**Educational and occupational sex segregation**

Although the extent of women's participation in the
labor force is approaching men in numbers, the nature of
their participation remains quite different. The United
States work force is still sex-segregated, where most
occupations are dominated by one sex or the other (Ferraro,
1984). Women continue to choose careers from a restricted,
stereotypically female range of occupational fields (Cook,
1993; Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983). Women are also concentrated
in professions of lower pay and status and represent the
lower levels of educational and career achievements (Betz,
1993; Hesse-Biber, 1985). Even in the female-dominated
fields, men comprise the highest levels (Kaufman, 1989).
Finally, women continue to be especially underrepresented
in certain career fields, particularly those involving math
and the sciences (Dix, 1987).

Kaufman (1989) discusses the problems associated with
such sex segregation by stating:

> Professionals are thought to derive a great deal of
> fulfillment from their work and to enjoy a high degree
> to autonomy. It is not clear, however, that
> professional women enjoy these advantages to the same
extent as do their male colleagues. Even when women are willing and able to make the commitment to a professional career, most find themselves located in subsidiary positions within prestige professions or in positions that do not accord them the autonomy, prestige, or pay customarily associated with the professional image (p. 330).

The women of this study do not necessarily follow these trends. They, in fact, represent a very small minority of women who have achieved Ph.D.s or M.D.s, a historically male accomplishment.

Underutilization of abilities

Women's intellectual abilities and talents tend not to be reflected in their educational and occupational choices; their career aspirations are often far lower than are the aspirations of males with comparable abilities (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983; Fitzgerald & Crites, 1980). For men, the relationship of intellect to educational attainment holds well. Among women, however, the relationship breaks down where "women fail to use their talents and abilities in educational and career pursuits, resulting in losses both to themselves and to a society that needs their talents" (Betz, 1993, p. 633).

Arnold (1987, 1989) found evidence of the underutilization of women's abilities in the well-known Illinois Valedictorian Project. This longitudinal project
followed 80 students who graduated as valedictorians from their high schools. Gender differences emerged immediately after high school graduation. Differences for women included a decline in self-confidence, a persistent concern about combining career with family, and lower levels of planned labor force participation. Two-thirds of the women valedictorians (but none of the males) planned to reduce or interrupt their careers to raise children (Arnold, 1987). Both male and female valedictorians were pursuing careers in traditionally male areas, but a large proportion of women (but no men) were pursuing traditionally female professions or homemaker roles (Arnold, 1989).

Some of the women in this study may be seen as "underutilizing their abilities". Many have chosen less demanding or more flexible careers, are working part-time, or have interrupted their careers to accommodate children. This judgment, as will be seen in Chapter 5, depends on how "utilize" is defined in our society.

Influences on Women's Career Development

Career barriers are defined by Betz (1993) as the variables or forces related to a woman's tendency to make gender-stereotypic, traditionally female choices that are not her intention or desire. As an opposing force, Betz
(1993) also defines career facilitators as factors related
to broadened career options and higher educational and
career achievements. A behavioral focus on the barriers
and facilitators that are unique to women's career
development is very important in understanding the content
of identity formation of the women of this study.

**Gender role and occupational stereotyping.** Perun and
DelVento-Bielby (1981) suggest an understanding of the
effects of social-structural constraints of women that
perpetuate gender-role and occupational stereotyping.
Early on, children learn gender-role stereotypes and
expectations for the sexes based upon direct messages and
observations of others (Hyde, 1985). Related to sex-role
sterotypes are occupational stereotypes, which deem
certain occupations as more appropriate for women. This
eyear childhood socialization, reinforced by the media,
parents, and teachers conditions girls to emphasize their
home and family pursuits over career pursuits in their
identities (Betz, 1993).
The participants of this study, despite their high academic and career achievements, were not immune to these messages as children. For some, such stereotyping may have had a significant impact of their choices throughout adulthood.

**Gender bias in education.** Early schooling is a major source of sex-role socialization whereby strong messages about appropriate behaviors and roles for girls are given and received. Through its effects on females' aspirations, expectations, and attitudes, education plays a significant role in the stratification of the labor force and women's positions at its lowest levels (Betz, 1993; Wirtenber & Nakmura, 1976). Some suspect practices in schools include gender role stereotyping in textbooks, different curricula for males and females, and bias in career counseling and testing (Wirtenber & Nakmura, 1976).

Barriers to women in higher education are also relevant to a discussion of career and family choices. Overt discriminatory practices in higher education have been amply noted in the literature. They include sex quotas for admissions, discrimination in the award of financial aid, lack of mentoring, and sexual harassment (Betz, 1993; Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983). Holland and
Eisenhart (1990) discovered that the peer culture within a coeducational institution emphasizes the value of romantic relationships for women over the value of academic achievements. It is these more subtle forms of discrimination that are more dangerous because they are difficult to detect and eliminate (Moore & Sagaria, 1993; Aisenberg & Harrington, 1993).

Bernard (1976) wrote some of the earliest criticisms of discrimination against women in higher education. Her descriptions include the “stag effect” which she defines as “a complex of exclusionary customs, practices, attitudes, conventions, and other social forms which protect the male turf from the intrusion of women” (Bernard, 1976, p. 23). Bernard (1976, 1988) also discusses the “putdown”, which refers to more active and overt behaviors that disparage, demean, and insult women. Ehrhart and Sandler (1987) describe several forms of “putdown” behaviors, which include: (1) disparaging women’s intellectual and professional capabilities; (2) using sexist humor, (3) advising women to lower their academic and career goals; (4) responding with surprise when women express desires for challenging careers; (5) not encouraging women to apply for fellowships or awards; and (6) focusing on marital and
parental status as a potential detriment to the career development of women. Another important concept in discussing the difficulties faced by women in higher education is Freeman’s (1989) concept of the “null educational environment”. In a null environment women are neither encouraged nor discouraged—they are simply ignored. There has been a serious lack of role models of education and occupational achievement for young women to emulate. Women of color face these same barriers associated with being a woman, but they also experience the “double whammy” (Andrews, 1993) of racial discrimination, tokenism, and lack of role models (Espin, 1980; Vasquez, 1982; Zeff, 1982).

Career counseling within the college or university can also reflect and perpetuate gender-role and occupational stereotyping. The data suggest that many career counselors hold traditional attitudes toward women’s roles (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983). Left unchecked, this can lead many women to not fully develop and utilize their intellectual capabilities. Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) note that advice to women often encourages them to stay in traditional roles or to pursue traditionally female occupations. All of
these influences potentially affect how the women in this study see themselves and define their roles in society.

**Career-family conflict.** Subtle assumptions about women are widely shared in society. One such assumption is that the mind-body relationship is somehow closer for women than for men and that those biological urges are thus stronger for women (Baruch & Barnett, 1978). Because of this view, a woman's life is "too often seen only in terms of her reproductive role...Furthermore, marriage and children are conceptualized as crucial to women's well-being" (Baruch & Barnett, 1978, p. 190). The timing and extent of work and family cycles are important variables in the career and identity development of women (Perun & Bielby, 1981). Educational and career achievements among men can be predicted by ability, motivation, experience, and college prestige; the only useful predictor among women is career versus family priorities (Arnold, 1989). Thus, assumptions about the reproductive imperative in women's lives have a significant effect on how women make career and family a part of their identities.

Rand and Miller (1972) suggest that a "cultural imperative" to combine marriage and career has replaced the centrality of marital and motherhood roles in women's
lives. Other research suggests that ninety percent of women who pursue careers still expect to have two or more children (Russo & Denmark, 1984). Catalyst (1987) also suggests that although most college women want a career, marriage and family, most are unprepared for the realities of combining these desires.

Several studies indicate that marital and parental statuses are important variables influencing the career and identity development of women. These studies suggest that career-oriented and/or employed women are less likely than home-oriented women to be married (Tinsley & Faunce, 1980; Yuen, Tinsley, & Tinsely, 1980). In comparison to married women, single women tend to achieve higher levels of education (Gigy, 1980; Houseknecht & Spanier, 1980); they are also more likely to pursue male-dominated occupations (Card, et al., 1980; Del Vento Bibly, 1980; Gigy, 1980). Career-oriented women tend to have fewer, if any, children (Card, et al., 1980; Tinsley & Faunce, 1980). Also, women with children are less likely to pursue nontraditional occupations (Greenfield, et al., 1980).

It also appears that having children also decreases a woman’s chance of being successful in her career (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). The reasons for this are varied.
Firstly, prioritization of family roles can lead to delay and confusion of young women's career plans. Women's career development involves one more step than men's; they decide whether or not they want to make outside employment a focus in their lives (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983). Betz (1993) argues that "...before women decide what occupation or career to pursue, they must decide whether or not and to what degree they wish to make outside employment a focus of their lives. Men, in contrast, are rarely allowed to consider the 'whether' and begin instead with the 'what', thus getting an earlier start in the process" (p. 648).

Secondly, the continued belief that they will need to be the primary homemaker and childraisers causes many young women to downscale their career aspirations and accept lower levels of achievement (Betz, 1993). Women enter a much narrower range of occupations than do men. One hypothesis is that typical women's jobs can be more easily combined with family responsibilities (Giele, 1982). Also, women continue to choose a discontinuous pattern to accommodate the needs of their families (Thompson & Walker, 1989). Significant occupational advancement often requires more persistent and intensive work involvement over an extended time (Lassalle & Spokane, 1987).
Thirdly, once a woman has made career decisions, the assumption that she is still primarily responsible for maintenance of a home and family creates obstacles in the form of role overload and role conflict (Betz, 1993). Working mothers retain almost sole responsibility for childcare (DiBenedetto & Tittle, 1990; Kinnear, Katz, & Berry, 1991). Men now help more around the house, yet that is exactly what they do—help (Cook, 1993). American time budget studies show that employed women are still doing roughly twice as much housework (23.6 hours per week) as their employed husbands (11.4 hours per week) (Pleck & Rustand, 1980). The amount of time devoted to housework and childcare seriously limits a woman’s professional pursuits more than any other factor (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). This is generally the case even with professional couples whom we imagine to practice equality in role allocation (Cook, 1993).

DiBenedetto & Tittle (1990) surveyed a group of college women about their career and family plans. The women in their sample tended to view their career preferences and a desire for children in terms of a trade-off. Thus, they held some assumptions about a conflict
between the two desires. This may be explained by the long-held assumption that female employment produces conflict for a woman (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987).

There is also a belief that female employment produces destructive effects on her marriage as well (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). These assumptions will presumably affect the choices these women will make regarding their futures as workers and mothers. Studies, however, do not support the hypothesis that marriages in which a woman works are less happy (Richardson, 1979; Locksley, 1980). The effects of women’s employment on marital strain and satisfaction appear to depend upon the couple’s attitudes toward the wife’s employment (Green & Russo, 1993), where couples with similar attitudes toward women’s roles tend to be higher in marital satisfaction (Cooper, Chassing, & Zeiss, 1985). Ross et al. (1983) found that if a wife wanted to work but had no support from her husband with regard to home responsibilities, her distress level increased while his did not. They also found lowest distress levels in couples that shared childcare and household responsibilities.

In summary, combining career with family is the most common trend for women in the United States. Thus the
timing of career and family cycles are important variables in women's development, including the women of this study. For a variety of reasons, marital and family roles have been shown to negatively impact a woman's career development and success. How, then, has it affected these ten women? Assumptions about the inherent conflict between women's family and career roles have an impact on the career development of women. Although it is assumed that women who attempt to combine roles will face dire levels of conflict in their lives, this is not supported by the research.

**Family background.** Parental socioeconomic (SES) status is one of the most consistent predictors of the occupational level achieved by males (Brown, 1970). Evidence of the influence of parental SES on women's career development is less consistent (Betz, 1993; Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983). Two very powerful predictors of women's career development are maternal employment and maternal level of education. Many studies have found that daughters of working mothers tend to be more career-oriented than daughters of homemakers (Altman & Grossman, 1977). Furthermore, daughters of working mothers appear to be more likely to choose nontraditional occupations in contrast to
daughters of homemakers (Crawford, 1978; Haber, 1980). Girls raised by two-career parents are also more likely to plan to combine family and work roles than those reared in families where only the father was employed (Stephan & Corder, 1985). Research has consistently suggested the importance of parental encouragement and support in facilitating daughters’ career development (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983). Also, daughters’ career achievements are related to a lack of pressure from parents toward the traditional female role (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983).

These theories are related to this study in two ways. Firstly, the educational level, employment status, and gender role attitudes of the participants’ mothers may have had an affect on their own development and life choices. The education, career, and gender role attitudes of the participants may, in turn, affect their own children’s choices and development.

**Education.** Education is one of the most important variables in women’s development (Watley & Kaplan, 1971; Wolfson, 1976). The most consistent relationship is that the more education a woman receives, the more likely she is to be working outside the home, regardless of marital or parental status (Fox, 1989; Houseknecht & Spanier, 1980;
Vetter, 1980). Moreover, occupational advancement is more closely linked to education for women than it is for men (Fox, 1989). A higher level of education in women is also related to a tendency to remain single and to lower fertility rates (Houseknecht & Spanier, 1980). Higher education in women is also related to more liberal gender-role attitudes and beliefs (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Mason, Czajka, & Arber, 1976), which have a significant impact of the life-choices women make.

This is very interesting information in light of the fact that these women have attained, or are in the process of attaining, the highest levels of formal education. Nonetheless, all of the women are married and have children, and only two are working full-time outside the home.

Psychosocial Theories

Ruthellen Josselson

Most discussions of psychosocial development begin with the work of Erikson (1968). Erikson (1959) described eight stages of task mastery and resolution of conflicts through which identity develops over a lifespan. His stages include trust versus mistrust; autonomy versus shame and doubt; initiative versus guilt; industry versus
inferiority; and, identity versus identity diffusion. Erikson (1959/1980) believed identity “connotes both a persistent sameness with oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others” (p. 109).

Marcia (1966) operationalized Erikson’s fifth stage, the identity resolution process. Marcia’s (1966) understanding of identity contained the two main components of exploration and commitment—their absence or presence defined an individual’s identity status. Exploration involves a questioning and exploring of options on an issue such as values and goals reinforced by parents and held in childhood. Commitment is defined as having the psychosocial capacity for self agency or internal autonomy and showing ownership of one’s own values and goals. The variables of exploration and commitment create Marcia’s four identity statuses: identity foreclosure, identity achievement, moratorium, or identity diffusion. The Figure One illustrates the interaction of the exploration and commitment variables in the four identity statuses.

Marcia’s four identity statuses (1966, 1980) are not progressive, nor permanent. The content areas Marcia (1966) focused upon were occupation and ideology on sex,
politics, and religion. Therefore, it is the process of exploration and commitment within occupation and ideology that determined an individual’s identity status. According to Marcia (1966), an identity achievement person "has experienced a crisis period and is committed to an occupation and ideology. He has seriously considered several occupational choices and has made a decision on his own terms...With respect to ideology, he seems to have reevaluated his beliefs and achieved a resolution that leaves him free to act" (pp. 551-552). A person with identity diffusion has not experienced a crisis period and displays a lack of commitment to an occupation or ideology.

Figure 1: Marcia's four identity statuses.
The *moratorium* person is in a crisis period characterized by an active exploration and also a conscious struggle to make commitments. His “sometimes bewildered appearance stems from his vital concern and internal preoccupation with what occasionally appear to him to be unresolved questions” (Marcia, 1966, p. 552). Finally, a *foreclosed* individual is described by Marcia (1966) as not having yet experienced a crisis, yet expressing a commitment or choice. He states, “It is difficult to tell where his parents’ goals for him leave off and where his begin. He is becoming what others have prepared or intended him to become as a child” (Marcia, 1966, p. 552). External conditioning chooses for him.

Josselson (1987, 1996) used this framework to examine women’s identity development. She set out to explore the internal differences among Marcia’s (1966) four identity groups and sought to explain why some women resolve their identity crises and why some do not. Her goal was to determine how women’s ego identity statuses of early adulthood influence later life choices in the content areas of sexual morality, occupation, and politics, and religion. Josselson conducted initial interviews with college seniors in the early 1970s and followed their life courses with

Josselson (1987, 1996) proposes that the most important developmental task facing women today is the formation of identity. Identity is the lens through which a woman bases her sense of herself as well as her vision of the structure of her life. Josselson (1987) defines identity as the stable, consistent, and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world. She proposes that identity integrates what one regards as central to oneself and how one is viewed by significant others in one’s life. In its essence, “identity becomes a means by which people organize and understand their experiences and deeply share their meaning systems with others. What we choose to value and deprecate, our system of ethics--these form the core of our sense of identity” (Josselson, 1987, p.11).

Josselson (1987) proposes that women achieve identity by uniquely negotiating the conflicting needs for connection and autonomy. Because women’s self is experienced so much in relationship to others, the process of anchoring is critical to identity formation; who a woman
is reflects her sense of what she means to others.

Anchoring is a term used by Josselson to describe the guiding values or core roles that make up one's identity. Josselson (1987) defines it as

"a way of attaching to aspects of the adult world, of having berth in it. For women, this attachment to the world involves connection to other people, even in the world of work. Anchoring for women is like a rapprochement process, where elements of the outside world are brought back to or through an important other to be integrated and made part of the self (p. 178)."

Anchoring seems to take place in four content areas for women: primary family, husband/children, career, and/or friends—usually some combination of these. Josselson (1987) states that women who have anchored in their primary families choose to become "purveyors of the heritage" (p. 175), the essence of the Foreclosed identity. Their lives feel meaningful and right because they are carrying on traditions that had made them feel secure as children and continue to find them a primary source of comfort and belief. The second possibility, anchoring in husband/children separate from the primary family, is a pattern found mainly among Josselson's participants who become Identity Achievements. Their sense of identity
resided in having formed new non-familially based modes of relating to others. They also had husbands who supported their talents and interests.

Centrality of career, a third possibility, is an anchor point for only a few women in Josselson's sample despite the fact that many had advanced degrees and all but a few were employed full-time. For a woman to anchor herself importantly in work, her work has to matter to someone who matters to her, such as a mentor, spouse or parent. When it does not, her occupational pursuits tend to be transitory as she searches for something else that will give her life meaning. The final anchoring possibility is friendship. Surprisingly, this seems to be the one chosen when others have been rejected or are unattainable.

Daniel Levinson

Following an in-depth study of the lives of 40 men, Levinson and others (1978) proposed a life-span theory of development. This work was heavily criticized (e.g. Baruch & Barnett, 1978; Enns, 1991) for its exclusion of women. In response to this vitriol, Levinson's 1996 publication The Season's of a Woman's Life chronicles the results of his study of 45 women. In this book, Levinson suggests that women go through the same sequence of eras as men at
the same ages but with significant content differences. In

essence, Levinson's (1978, 1996) work is based upon the

assumption that "underlying the manifest variety and
disorder there is a basic sequence that all lives go
through in their own individual ways" (p. 13). His theory
conceives of the life cycle as a sequence of age-related
eras, where each era has its own bio-psycho-social demands.

Levinson approaches the phenomenon of role choice as
part of an "underlying pattern or design of a person's life
at a given time" (Levinson, 1996, p. 6). He refers to this
pattern as the "life structure", which consists of internal
and external aspects. External aspects include a person's
overall pattern of roles, memberships, interests, condition
and style of living, and long-term goals. The internal
aspects are core values, fantasies, and psychodynamics that
shape one's engagement with the world.

According to Levinson (1996), the life structure also
contains several dimensions. The first dimension is
occupation/career that throughout the life structure is
explored, committed to, lived, and revised. Relationships
are also an important dimension of the life structure; they
include family of origin, intimate relationships, children,
and friends. Life style includes avocational interests,
social life, religious participation, and community membership. Mentorship, whether it be having one, separating from one, or being one is another dimension that is attended to in the life structure. Finally, Levinson states that the life dream, the vision of the self in the world, integrates all other elements of the life structure.

Levinson (1996) also identifies two internal figures that emerge and cause conflict throughout the eras of women's development. The Traditional Homemaker Figure values the "traditional marriage enterprise", in which she seeks to marry, have children, care for children, and maintain the household. The Anti-Traditional Figure, on the contrary, seeks to be more independent, to develop occupational skills, and postpone or defer children.

Levinson divides the lifespan into three main eras that describe how one examines his or her relationship between the self and the world. Eras are partially overlapping; each new era begins as the previous one approaches its end. As they have particular relevance to my interests and the question at hand, I will briefly review key aspects of "Early Adult Transition (ages 17-22),"
"Entry Life Structure for Early Adulthood" (ages 22-28), "Age Thirty Transition" (ages 28-33), and the "Culminating Life Structure" (ages 33-40).

The *Early Adult Transition period* (age 17-22) represents the transition between adolescence and early adulthood. The first task of this period is to terminate the adolescent life structure through modification of relationships with family of origin and the self to become autonomous or to achieve a capacity for self-agency. The second developmental task is to explore the possibilities of the adult world. For Levinson’s women, the Early Adult transition differed significantly for those he defined as career women and homemakers. The homemakers identified little with the Anti-Traditional Figure as they moved toward a Traditional Marriage. The career women in this stage struggled with the two figures as they explored their futures.

The next developmental period for women as described by Levinson (1996) is *Entry Life Structure for Early Adulthood* (ages 22-28). For the women in the homemaker sample and in this age group, the central component was marriage and family. Some of these women had jobs, but none saw them as important or meaningful. For the career
women, whether married or not, the central component to their life structure was work. This is not to say that family was not important, but was less salient than career. Interestingly, despite clear plans for career-centered lives, the career women still faced internal struggles between the Traditional Homemaker Figure and the internal Anti-Traditional Figure during this stage.

The succeeding era is the Age Thirty Transition (ages 28-32). For the women in Levinson’s study, this period was marked by a great deal of personal growth. The homemakers, for the most part had achieved their goals in the Traditional marriage Enterprise and began to expand their participation in the public realm. These women engaged in an assessment of previous choices and new exploration process. Most of the career women in his sample had established a modified form of the Traditional Marriage Enterprise in which they engaged in multiple roles of work and homemaking. During the Transition period, career women reassessed their accomplishments and goals and went through minor or major changes in their careers and relationships.

The “Culminating Life Structure” (ages 33-40) is a time to establish a more secure place for ourselves in society and to put our dreams and goals into a concrete
plan. The task of forming a life structure becomes more important than the exploration of the previous stage. The first phase is devoted to establishing and stabilizing a new life structure. The second phase is what Levinson (1996) calls "becoming one's own woman." The primary task in this phase is to enhance one's life within the existing life structure, by becoming more independent, finding one's voice, and through receiving affirmation from others about doing what is most important to her.

Gail Sheehy

We are not unlike a particularly hardy crustacean. The lobster grows by developing and shedding a series of hard, protective shells. Each time it expands from within, the confining shell must be sloughed off. It is left exposed and vulnerable until, in time, a new covering grows to replace the old (Sheehy, 1974, p. 24).

Gail Sheehy's (1974) *Passages* stresses the idea that there is no single correct way to resolve a developmental task. She proposes that there are many valid patterns of favorable resolution for women, as well as several unfavorable patterns. Sheehy's (1974) work is similar to Levinson's framework in that it defines age-related crises, or "passages", that women face in their development. Passages include marker events that are the concrete happenings in our lives (graduation, marriage, childbirth,
getting or losing a job, etc.). A developmental passage is not defined in terms of marker events; it is defined by internal changes that begin within that event. Overall, during each of these passages, how we feel about our way of living will undergo subtle changes in four areas of perception. One is the interior sense of self in relation to others. A second is the proportion of safeness to danger we feel in our lives. A third is our perception of time—do we have plenty of it, or are we beginning to feel that time is running out? Last, there will be some shift at the gut level in our sense of aliveness or stagnation. These are the hazy sensations that compose the background tone of living and shape the decisions on which we take action (p. 25).

Sheehy proposes a “developmental ladder” of several life passages. She states that “although there are many patterns for passing through each period, there is only one sequence” (Sheehy, 1974, p. 204).

**Pulling up roots (ages 18-22).** The pulling up roots stage involves a gradual detachment of ourselves from our families and an initiation of the search for a personal identity. This time is often referred to as the “crisis of adolescence.” Underlying this step, and all other steps in her framework, is a what Sheehy describes as a contradictory push and pull of the merger self and the seeker self. The merger self has impulse to connect; the seeker self searches for individuality. An inner custodian holds our internalized restrictions that both inhibit and
protect us from harm. In essence, the tasks during this time are to “locate ourselves in a peer group role, a sex role, an anticipated occupation, an ideology or world view” (p. 47). Furthermore, we replace the parental views of the world with our own evolving perspective.

The trying twenties. During the twenties, most men funnel energies into making an independent way in the world. A woman, according to Sheehy (1974), does not have to find an independent form in her twenties because “there is always a back door out. She can attach to a Stronger One. She can become the maker of babies and baker of brownies, the carrier of her husband’s dream. If she resists this pattern, she runs the contradiction between permissions for development given to men and women” (pp. 127-128). During this stage of life, a culturally-determined career timetable indicates the appropriate time one should spend in moving from one stage to the next. Sheehy (1974) warns, “If she is a married woman with a small child and is also trying to balance an outside commitment, she can seldom be faithful to a career in the way a man can. She is not yet practiced or confident
enough in any area to integrate all her competing priorities. The career that provides her husband stability may throw her into pandemonium" (pp. 128-129).

**Catch-thirty.** Sheehy proposes that the restrictions we feel on nearing age 30 are the outgrowth of the choices made during the twenties. A common reaction to the thirties is tearing up the life one spent most of the twenties putting together. Sheehy (1974) describes a vague, but persistent sense of wanting to be something more, a time when important new choices are made and commitments altered or deepened. She states that this stage "involves great change, turmoil, and commonly, crisis—a simultaneous feeling of rock bottom and the urge to break out" (p. 164).

First, a woman reappraises most aspects of her lives. Her marriage commitment may be questioned and the initial marriage contract revised to allow for new self-perceptions. What is most characteristic of this passage is a de-emphasize on external circumstances; voices from within become much more insistent. For the first time, the "me" is starting to take on as much value as "others."

**Rooting and extending.** Sheehy argues that only in the early thirties do we begin to settle down. We begin to convert revised dreams into concrete goals. This is often
described as a time of peace. In addition to a developmental ladder, Sheehy (1974) describes a number of life patterns that women evaluate, take on, and revise throughout her development. They include: the caregiver, the nurturer who defers achievement, the achiever who defers nurturing, late baby superachievers, integrators, never-married women, and transients. These patterns will be described in Chapter Five.

**Summary**

These three psychological theories, when integrated, will be used in Chapter 5 to examine the developmental issues and milestones of ten high-achieving mothers. More specifically, the theories of Josselson, Sheehy, and Levinson will illuminate how these women choose and live out their roles.

**Cognitive-Structural Theories**

**Carol Gilligan**

Gilligan's work on moral development was influenced by a number of psychological and cognitive-structural theorists, but most specifically by Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg's original (1969) research on moral development did not include women subjects. He did, however, generalize his findings to both men and women. Gilligan
began to study moral development and discovered "a form of moral reasoning that she believed to be different from the reasoning described by Kohlberg" (Rodgers, 1990, p. 36). Using Kohlberg's language, Gilligan (1982/1993) called the pattern of reasoning identified by him as the "justice voice" and called the moral orientation she revealed through her conversations with women contemplating abortion as a "care voice" (Gilligan, 1982).

In her 1982 work *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan presents her findings about the moral development of women. The book includes the research from three studies: one explored identity and moral development of college students (1981); another emphasized how women make decisions about abortion (Gilligan & Belenky, 1980), and; a rights and responsibilities study examined different ways of moral thinking and their relationship ways of thinking about the self (Gilligan & Murphy, 1979). Subsequent works focus on the need to remap all of psychology to include research on women’s experience.

Kohlberg's (1969) theory of moral development focused on understanding justice reasoning. He proposed a six-stage progression from less to more complex moral thinking in which universal justice is the ultimate goal. In
contrast, Gilligan (1986) observed women's thinking to be different, with a focus on care and attachment to others. Within her framework, care and relationships with others, overlooked by Kohlberg, carry equal weight with self-care in making moral decisions. Most women also identified care and responsibility as central to constructing moral problems, considering how to resolve them, and evaluating "what happened" after the fact (Gilligan, 1977, 1982/1993).

In summary, Gilligan (1982) writes:

In this conception, the moral problem arises from conflicting responsibilities rather than from competing rights and requires from its resolution a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract. This conception of morality as concerned with the activity of care centers moral development around the understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as the concept of morality as fairness ties moral development to the understanding of rights and rules (p. 19).

Based upon her interviews with twenty-nine women facing abortion decisions, Gilligan proposed a "morality of care" framework that develops through a sequence of three levels and two transition periods. The levels identify a relationship between self and others; transitions represent shifts between selfishness and responsibility. The framework is constructed as follows:

Level one: Orientation to individual survival. A woman's preoccupation with and orientation to individual
survival and self-interest characterize the first stage. A question of what is the right decision emerges only if one’s own needs are in conflict. Relationships often do not meet this woman’s expectations; hence, some women intentionally isolate themselves from others.

**First transition: From selfishness to responsibility.** During the subsequent transitional period women label their earlier perspectives as selfish and no longer acceptable. The criterion used to make decisions shifts from independence and selfishness to connection and responsibility. Furthermore, a woman in this transition considers the opportunity for doing the right thing and integrates responsibility and care into decisions.

**Level two: Goodness as self-sacrifice.** In the second stage, women construe morality as a responsibility to others. This stage is often marked by an inattention to one’s own personal needs and concerns through the adoption of a “self-sacrificing position of goodness” (Enns, 1991, p. 210). She may give up her own needs to remain in connection with others and avoids hurting others at all costs. Within the move from a self-centered, independent worldview, social acceptance becomes key. Her behaviors may seem to reflect those of a conventional woman.
Second Transition: From Goodness to Truth. During the second transitional phase, many women recognize the legitimacy of their own needs, and their previous inattention to self. They begin to question their tendency to put others before themselves. What results is an examination of how personal needs can be incorporated within realm of responsibility. Moral decisions begin to include one’s own needs—these needs are no longer equated with selfishness.

Level Three: The Morality of Nonviolence. The second transition evolves into a third stage of a "transformed understanding of self and a corresponding redefinition of morality" (Gilligan, 1977, p. 504). This transformation involves an effective balance of self-nurture and care for others. Nonviolence, a moral mandate to avoid hurt, becomes the overriding principle that governs moral judgment and action. The dichotomization of selfishness and responsibility disappears as one recognizes the power to select among competing choices while keeping needs in mind.

Belenky and Others

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) address questions such as: What is truth? What is
authority? What counts for evidence? How do I know what I know? (Rodgers, 1998). Belenky et al. (1986) focused on what else might be important to note about women's development that are invisible in Perry's (1970) work. Perry’s (1970) model of intellectual/ethical development of college students proposes that students often start college with dualistic, either-or ways of viewing the world and themselves. He suggested that with maturity students recognize and become comfortable with multiple ways of thinking and ambiguity. Ultimately they learn to weigh the merits of views and ideas according to non-absolute criteria and integrate best-case judgments about what counts as knowledge. In his theory, Perry (1970) describes a style of knowing that Belenky et al. (1986) call “separate”. It focuses on trying to be objective, using logical criteria and debate to evaluate ideas, not personalizing judgments, and not emphasizing the affective aspects of knowing.

Belenky et al.'s (1986) studies of women found many parallels and a few differences from Perry’s (1970) proposed pattern when they studied women. Their stages seem to be structurally similar, but stylistically quite different. These researchers defined, in addition to the
“separate knowing” style, the existence of “connected knowing” style. The “connected” style is more contextual and emphasizes the understanding of another person’s viewpoint, learning in context, and relating ideas to personal experiences relationships (Belenky, et al., 1986).

Rather than stages, Belenky et al. (1986) refer to different ways of knowing as "perspectives" that are not fixed, universal or exhaustive. They use the metaphor of "voice" to describe women's intellectual and ethical development. The authors found that for women, the development of voice, mind, and self are "intricately intertwined" (p. 18). From their study emerged five "epistemological perspectives from which women know and view the world" (p.15).

**Silence.** Silence is the first stage of knowing whereby women do not perceive themselves as able to learn. They experience themselves as passive, reactive, and dependent. Hence, they are often subject to the power and aggression of others. They are structurally dualistic with absolute truths—those truths coming from an authority that is powerful and omnipotent. This blind obedience to authority, according to the silent woman, will ensure her survival.
**Received knowledge.** Received knowledge is the next stage where women emphasize listening to authority figures for the “right” knowledge. They are also dualistic with absolute truths. Close attention to the wisdom of others is central to the knowing process. The self is seen self as capable of receiving knowledge, not creating it. One’s own experience and opinions, then, are discounted. A woman in this stage defines learning as receiving, retaining, and returning words of authorities. There is little or no tolerance for ambiguity at this stage. An individual that is in the Received Knowing stage and has a connected style will take an authority’s truths and act on them in ways that create strong harmonious connections. The value of her work determined by the authority’s truth and evaluations (cognitive level) and staying connected (style). Separate Received Knowers take an authority’s truths and act on them in ways that unilaterally advances or promotes the self. The value of her work is determined by an authority’s truth and evaluations (cognitive level) and advancing her agenda (style).

**Subjective knowledge.** Next, Subjective knowledge is developed when uncertainty of external authority is realized. Women begin to emphasize subjective knowing, or
authority within the self, based upon their own experiences. An uncritical acceptance of multiple perspectives also characterizes a Subjective Knower. This stage can still be seen as dualistic in that the belief of the existence of truth remains—this truth is now personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited. This truth is not universal, however, but each person’s experience make their own reality unique. This stage can also be seen as multiplistic where there is an uncritical acceptance of multiple perspectives. A woman at this stage is also less concerned about persuading others to her viewpoint. Finally, there is a general distrust of logic, analysis, abstraction, and even language since all are alien territory belonging to men. Connected Subjective Knowers exercise autonomy in inclusive ways. They maximize input of others and surface threats to relationships; they act collaboratively but autonomously. Separate Subjective Knowers exercise autonomy in behaving in ways that advance their status, desires, agenda, and goals in assertive, argumentative, competitive, ways.

Procedural knowledge. Procedural knowledge is the fourth stage when women tend to use some kind of procedures by which they learn and communicate knowledge.
The emphasis is on skills and techniques of critical thinking, textual analysis, and scientific method. This person recognizes that some events are open to interpretation and that some interpretations make better sense than others based upon certain objectives standards. Procedural knowers regain some trust in authority; authorities do not have answers, just techniques for constructing answers. They learn that intuition can deceive and gut reactions can be misleading.

**Constructed knowledge.** Constructed knowledge is the final stage, whereby women begin the process of finding their own voice in constructing knowledge. All knowledge is constructed and the knower sees herself as an intimate part of the known. The knowledge that is acquired depends on context or frame of reference of knower. In other words, everything is relative to the Constructed Knower. Theories are not seen as the absolute truth but instead models for approximating experience—"educated guesswork." A Constructed Knower feels responsibility for examining, choosing, questioning, and developing the systems that she will use for constructing knowledge. She stresses integration, inclusion, and balance—not exclusion.
Summary

In summary, Gilligan (1982) and Belenky et al. (1986) also provide an interesting framework for understanding the unique process many women engage in when they make decisions about their life roles. Chapter 5 will discuss, using Gilligan’s and Belenky’s terminology and concepts how these women make meaning of their roles and lives.

Motherhood with a Capital “M”

Motherhood is a remarkably important issue for women. In all societies, women are expected to have children. Most women, in fact, do fulfill this expectation. They bear children through biological pregnancy achieved through sexual intercourse; others become mothers through adoption, stepparenting, or foster care; and many others utilize reproductive technologies such as donor insemination, invitro fertilization, embryo transfer, and surrogacy to achieve pregnancy (Seegmiller, 1993). Cultural expectation and definitions of what it means to be a mother shape the experience of children on women’s lives.

The concept of motherhood has not always been the same. Recent work by social historians indicates that our modern notion of motherhood has its roots in the nineteenth century middle-class. At that time motherhood developed
semi-sacred connotations and became the most important function of a woman. Prior to this glorification of motherhood the bearing and rearing of children was integrated into the other work women did and was not women's most important role (Huffnung, 1989). Women and men worked side by side in and around their home. Industrialization in the nineteenth century disrupted the unity of home and work. It also served to devalue women's work within the family. Paid work began to take place away from home in factories and was assigned to men; women were assigned to the home as housewives. Hence, homemaking and child care became full-time work that did not receive the economic benefits or respect of outside, paid work (Huffnung, 1989).

Michelle Huffnung (1989) discusses this contemporary concept of motherhood and the problems it poses for women. She asserts that "we hold a set of assumptions and beliefs that is founded on the premise that the mother-child unit is basic, universal, and psychologically most suited for both the healthy development of the child and the fulfillment of the mother" (Huffnung, 1989, p. 157). This narrow definition of mothering conflicts with other important aspects of women's lives such as productive work.
and economic independence. Furthermore, this aspect of motherhood limits women’s public participation at a time when women have won access to the public world. The way we have defined motherhood results in economic dependence on her husband and a psychological dependence on her children. Huffnung (1989) further supposes that until children are valued members of society and child care is considered work important enough to be done by both men and women, motherhood will keep women in “second place”.

The Motherhood Mystique

Huffnung (1989) states that our contemporary definition of motherhood can be defined as the motherhood mystique. Four aspects of the motherhood mystique (McBride, 1973) are that: (1) ultimate fulfillment as a woman is achieved by becoming a mother; (2) the body of work assigned to mothers—caring for a child, home, and husband—fits together in a noncontradictory matter; (3) to be a good mother, a woman must like being a mother and all of the work that goes with it; (4) a woman’s intense, exclusive devotion to mother is good for her children.

Huffnung (1989) debunks each of these assumptions. Firstly, she states that in spite of strong social approval for childbearing, women do not find birth to provide
instantaneous and ultimate fulfillment. All relationships, those with children included, require time and energy. In fact, some women are disappointed to discover the exhaustion and distraction of motherhood.

The second aspect of the motherhood mystique is the false assumption that care of child, home, and husband are complementary. Huffnung states that this is not true; conflict exists among these roles. The needs and demands of a child and a marriage often are at odds. Some of the role changes bring stress and conflicting feelings in most mothers.

The third aspect of the motherhood mystique is that to be a good mother, one must totally enjoy all aspects of mothering. Huffnung (1989) disagrees, stating “As people, women have different personalities, talents, and temperaments, but as mothers they are expected to be continually patient, even-tempered, and consistent. When they fail to meet these impossible expectations, they fear that they are bad mothers, that they are failing their children” (p. 163).

The fourth aspect—that exclusive, full-time mothering is best for child development—is false according to Huffnung (1989). Having one person on twenty-four-hour
duty is not necessary for meeting the developmental needs of a child. In fact, it may be a limitation to the development of the child. She reasons that even the most even-tempered women have bad days, causing them to be either inattentive or overindulgent. Consequently, children raised by at-home mothers may be overmothered or undermothered (Huffnung, 1989).

In summary, Huffnung (1989) argues that mother-work, as we define it today, extracts a great cost from women. She states that “although it carries heavy responsibility, it brings none of the material rewards of employment. It is demeaned and trivialized in the mass media...It is not integrated with productive work; rather, it conflicts with work or career, thereby limiting a women’s independence, achievement, earnings, and status” (Huffnung, 1989, pp. 161-162).

The Wonders of Motherhood

On the other hand, for many women mothering is one of the most meaningful experiences in their lives. In their book What's a Smart Woman Like you Doing at Home? Burton, et al. (1986) state that women are rediscovering the merits of home and the pleasures of rearing children. They say:

A whole new generation of mothers rocks the cradle today. They are savvy to their rights and aware of
their choices. And though they have been raised with
the notion that a woman's greatest contribution lies
outside the home, they are discovering—sometimes to
their great surprise—that they want to devote more
time to tending the hearth and caring for their
children. At a time when women can choose among an
array of exciting possibilities, more and more mothers
are deciding to stay home and invest their energies in
a very tangible future—the next generation (p. 18).

According to the authors, most women are not "stuck"
at home; they are there because of enormous convictions
about the importance of what they do. Furthermore, mothers
do not stay home just because they are tired of juggling
family and career; they do not stay home just because they
want to 'be there' for the first word and the first step.
Instead, women

want to be home because in some quiet moment of caring
for their children, they have suddenly experienced the
vastness, the intricacies, the delicate nature of this
work. While performing some entirely routine act of
nurturing, they have unexpectedly stumbled on a moment
of insight so luminous as to reveal with imposing
clarity that the greatest opportunity for success they
may ever have is nestled right there in their arms
(Burton, et al., 1986, p. 20).

Sanders and Bullen (1992) surveyed at-home mothers
about why they made the decision to stay at home to raise
their children. The following twenty reasons were most
common:
(1) I'm the best one to raise my child; no one else can do it as well.
(2) I'm not missing my child's childhood.
(3) I fell in love with my child.
(4) I have a deeper relationship with my child because I am at home.
(5) Raising my child is a job that really matters.
(6) We're raising our children with our values.
(7) I'm my child's first teacher.
(8) I don't have to worry about "quality time".
(9) I'm not stressed out from working two full-time jobs.
(10) I do not have to feel guilty or worry about how by child is cared for when I'm not there.
(11) I'm my own boss and have the freedom to set my own schedule.
(12) I have more opportunities for personal growth.
(13) I can start my own at-home business.
(14) Parenting is joyful work.
(15) Parenting is work that focuses on people, not things.
(16) Parenting is responsible work.
Parenting is work that promotes a better quality of life.

I'm there when my child needs me.

By sequencing, I can enjoy my time at home and then reenter the work force when I'm ready.

Caring for my children is my profession.

Sanders and Bullen (1992) do not claim that full-time motherhood is a stress-free endeavor. They also discuss the many challenges at-home mothers face. The first, and most prevalent, difficulty is putting one’s career on hold. This may be especially difficult for high-achieving women (and may be so for the women in this study) who have attained a certain level of outside success and feel they need to stay up in their field. It can be a huge adjustment where formerly employed mothers miss such joys as receiving their own paycheck, feelings of achievement and recognition, camaraderie with colleagues, professional status, and even adult conversation. Another challenge for at-home mothers is loss of structure in their daily lives. Along with this issue often comes boredom and drudgery with household responsibilities. Also prevalent among at-home moms are feelings of powerlessness, guilt, isolation, and
inadequacy. These women often experience a loss of identity and self-esteem, and difficulty staying intellectually active.

The Conflict

As is evident from the above discussion, women receive mixed messages from society about the merits of motherhood, paid work, or a combination of the two. In essence, there are two sets of incongruous societal expectations for women. Some messages born of the patriarchal tradition where the family life is the responsibility of women (Huffnung, 1989). Our own mothers were generally home when we were children. Whether positive or negative, we felt the impact their presence (Burton, et al., 1986). Then there are those made possible by industrialization—individuality, successful accomplishment, equality (Huffnung, 1989). Women are encouraged to achieve high levels of educational attainment to prepare for challenging work, but they are also expected to become mothers at the same time.

This contradiction surely takes its toll on women who, unlike men, are faced with making decisions about children and careers. On the one hand, we want what is best for our children and fear giving up the chance to offer our
children the kind of home life we had once enjoyed. On the other, we fear giving up what we have worked so hard to achieve in our educational and career pursuits. Linda Sexton (1980) eloquently states that young women are caught between two worlds, the feminine mystique of their mother’s generation and the feminist mystique of their own. Facing this dilemma often throw us into an unanticipated search for who we really are. It is this search that is the focus of this study.

Gender Ideology/Sex-Role Attitudes

…the sexes’ lives are different because in some very real ways, they live in different worlds (Cook, 1993, p. 228).

History and the social climate are important influences on women’s identity development in general, and the development and lives of the women in this study. Gender ideology and sex-role attitudes are interwoven into the very fabric of our society. Gender represents much more than an individual’s beliefs; it is all-pervasive, but at times, very invisible. It is defined by Good, Gilbert, and Scher (1990) as “the psychological, social, and cultural features frequently associated with the biological categories of male and female” (p. 376). Gender ideology
encompasses the ways our society is differentiated on the basis of biological sex: interpersonally, socially, politically, and occupationally (Cook, 1993).

Identity involves a dynamic process of piecing together parts of one's personality within the realities of a gendered world. Josselson (1987) concludes that throughout history, a woman's place has been defined by her society. She states, “Even when these definitions are more implicit than explicit, women are susceptible to cultural definitions of how they ought to be and sensitive to social guidelines that tell them whether they are doing a good job at being women” (p. 2). Within the parameters dictated by the social climate, and more importantly how she defines those parameters, each woman in this study makes choices about what best fits her own goals and wishes for a life. She, too, is susceptible to society's definitions of what it means to be a woman.

One of the most consistent findings in the research literature concerns the greater tendency of career-oriented women to express liberal or feminist attitudes toward women’s roles (Atkinson & Huston, 1984; Betz, 1991; Dreyer, et al., 1981; Stafford, 1984). Less rigid sex-role stereotypes are also related to higher levels of
educational aspirations and attainment (Dreyer, Woods, & James, 1981; Lyson & Brown, 1982; Zuckerman, 1981), and to stronger career motivation and higher career aspirations (Komarovsky, 1982; Lyson & Brown, 1982). Furthermore, Fassinger (1985, 1990) found that more liberal gender-role attitudes were the most consistent predictors of high and nontraditional career aspirations among college women.

How do we develop our beliefs and values about gender? As stated earlier, culturally-based sex-role socialization operates from early childhood. Some argue that despite gains in women’s movements, schooling still prepares young girls for their roles of wife and mother and the development of characteristics to make them successful at those roles. Many young girls are not socialized for careers, and if they are, it is for female-appropriate ones (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983).

As a result of sex-role socialization, the sexes generally develop different orientations to life, where men tend to define themselves and their lives primarily through individual, goal-directed activity, and women through interdependent nurturing relationships (Forrest & Mikolaitis, 1986). Thus, some women may be more likely to
gauge the quality of their lives, work lives included, by
the quality of their relationships with other people

In the research, gender stereotyping is directly
linked to women's work experiences (Barrett, 1984). In the
work arena, women must deal with sex segregation,
evaluation bias, sexual harassment, greater pressure on
their performance and exclusion from certain jobs (Russo,
et al., 1986). Many women who enter traditionally male
occupations must deal with the stress and isolation of
tokenism. They must also deal with the responses of some
male peers, which can be discouraging or even hostile
(Guber & Bjorn, 1982; O'Farrell, 1982). Gender stereotypes
and the resultant orientation toward relationships are also
related to women's family choices. Traditional roles in our
society prescribe that women should be the nurturers of
home and family. This study seeks to illuminate this
relationship. Through interview questions, I attempt to
get at each participant's gender beliefs about women's
"natural" tendency toward nurturance.

Summary

It is argued that women's experience is neither well
represented nor adequately explained by existing models of
adult development (Peck, 1986). Whereas cognitive
development theories underlie the 'how' or process of
development, psychosocial theories are concerned with the
'what' or content of developmental structures of thinking
and making meaning (Rodgers, 1980). Behavioral theory
provides a social, economic, and cultural context for
understanding both the cognitive-developmental and
psychosocial theories. Hence, the three families of theory
examine somewhat different phenomena, and in combination
with concepts of gender and motherhood, provide a more
complete understanding of women’s identity development. It
is with this understanding that I undertake my own
examination of women’s development.
CHAPTER 3

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This in-depth qualitative exploration of the lives of ten women seeks to discover the complexity of women's experiences with career and family. More specifically, the goal of this study is to understand how women with advanced education and training experience gender, their career and family roles, and the meaning and influence of their roles in their lives. Through my interviews with this group of women, I sought a better understanding of how we define, choose, and construct our roles, how we balance the personal and professional, the significance of gender in our lives, and how all of this is related to identity development.

The purpose of this chapter is to articulate the design and methodological considerations that guided my process of inquiry in this study. I designed a
naturalistic inquiry based upon principles of grounded
theory; this paradigm and its assumptions fit the nature of
the phenomenon in question and my intentions. My rationale
for the selection of such a qualitative approach will be
elaborated in the pages to follow. I will also explore
sampling considerations, interview protocols, and the
planning of data collection and recording modes. A
discussion of modes of data collection, data analysis and
procedures, trustworthiness procedures, ethical
considerations, monitoring subjectivity, and design
limitations will follow.

Qualitative Inquiry

I selected naturalistic inquiry for this study, as it
fit the research focus of the discovery and understanding
of human meaning construction. In selecting a paradigm of
inquiry for a specific topic or research focus, it is
essential to understand the underlying assumptions or
axioms of that paradigm to make an accurate assessment of
appropriateness to the focus, and to guide the design of
the study. Lincoln & Guba (1985) clearly describe five
axioms underlying the naturalistic or qualitative paradigm.
They are as follows:
Axiom One. The qualitative approach assumes that realities are multiple and constructed. Reality is a complex notion which accommodates multiple legitimate constructed interpretations by both the researched and researcher. The purpose of qualitative inquiry is to understand the multiple ways a phenomenon is constructed, not to predict outcomes or test pre-determined hypotheses. According to Bogdan and Bilken (1992), the goal of the naturalistic researcher is "to better understand human behavior and experience... to grasp the process by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are" (p. 49). This assumption fits with the study at hand, as the goal was not to predict the behaviors of these women, but to uncover the complex ways in which women make meaning of work, family, and gender. Each woman's story constitutes an equally valid construction of reality as I understood it.

Axiom Two. The relationship of the researcher and participant is mutually reciprocal, whereby knower and known are interactive, inseparable, and ever-changing. The researcher attempts to reconstruct the participants' construction of reality; meaning made by both parties is constantly shifting through daily experiences and the
research process itself. It is imperative for a researcher to realize that she may influence or contribute to the participants' meaning-making process. The researcher, too, will be constantly influenced by her experiences with the participants. I am aware of how my own standpoint and constructions of gender, work, and family roles influenced how I posed questions and understood the responses. I attempted to limit my influence in participant interviews to the extent possible. My goal was to create a construction of meaning that is mutually agreed upon by myself and each participant at that particular point in time. Issues of subjectivity, quite pertinent to this study, will be elaborated later in this chapter.

Axiom Three. The goal of naturalistic inquiry is to gain an understanding, or to develop working hypotheses, which are time- and context-bound. Therefore, the experiences of the women studied cannot be generalized to all women or all situations. The depth of our understanding of women's roles and identity development may be enhanced, however, by detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences. A detailed account of my standpoint as well as the participants' experiences allows
the readers to decide for themselves whether the patterns are transferable to their own lives or to other contexts.

Axiom Four. Establishing cause and effect is neither a goal nor a potential of naturalistic inquiry; in fact, naturalistic inquiry rejects notions of cause and effect. They cannot be distinguished as all factors shape and influence each other simultaneously and continuously. This study captures a moment in time whereby that which is described has undoubtedly changed over the passage of time. Women’s experiences are complex and continue to change their shape and form over time. It is impossible to determine the causal relationship among all of the internal and external factors influencing the evolution of their identities and life roles.

Axiom Five. All research, whether positivistic or naturalistic in nature, is value-bound. In other words, inquiry is influenced, directly and indirectly, intentionally and unintentionally, by the values of the researcher. Objective or unbiased positioning is impossible in all types of research. The selection of the problem area, the questions asked in the interview, and the theories used to guide data collection and interpretation are seen through the valued lens of the researcher, such
that the nature and outcomes of the study are greatly affected by the researcher's worldview. The framing of this study reflects my own values, interests, and concerns. Through careful awareness, reflection, and monitoring of my biases, my commitment to women's development does not contaminate; it in fact enhances this research. Furthermore, I believe that it is my duty to provide the reader, to the best of my ability, statements regarding my values and biases regarding various topics as they surface in the study. Again, issues of subjectivity will receive special attention later in this chapter.

In addition to these five axioms or assumptions, which create an overall framework for the naturalistic paradigm, Lincoln and Guba (pp. 39-43) discuss fourteen characteristics of naturalistic inquiry on which the research design of this study are based. They include:

1) **Natural setting.** Naturalistic research is conducted in the natural setting, or context, in which the phenomenon of study usually exists. The naturalistic ontology, or beliefs about the nature of reality, suggests that realities are best understood in their context. Thus,
the setting in which the phenomenon takes place is just as much a part of understanding another’s reality as the phenomenon itself.

In this study, interviews were conducted in the living or working environments of the participants, unless they preferred otherwise. Ultimately, the participants were free to choose a time and location that suited their needs. It was my hope that joining the participants in settings of which they are familiar would increase their comfort in sharing some intimate details of their lives. By entering their living or working spaces, participants may have been more likely to be attuned to their experiences within and of those spaces. In addition, I was able to gather some important data from observations of each participant’s space and how she functioned within it. There is some question about whether or not interviews can ever be “natural”. I attempted to minimize the researcher-subject distinction and create an atmosphere of reciprocity and mutual sharing, so that participants might accept our interviews as more natural conversations about their experiences.
2) **Human instrument.** The researcher is the primary instrument for gathering data. It is only a human that has the capacity to adapt to the range of and ever-changing realities that occur during data collection and interpretation. Naturalistic research posits that it is possible to understand the complexity of another person only through human interaction. While this type of interaction certainly has its limitations, through the dynamics of dialogue, a researcher has the opportunity to clarify, probe, follow-up, and engage in mutual meaning-making with her participants. Therefore, my conversations with women provided a richness and depth of data that would not be accessible through other means.

3) **Utilization of tacit knowledge.** Within the naturalistic paradigm, intuitive, or tacit, knowledge is legitimate and valuable. A researcher's intuitive insights, or hunches, are an important form of knowing and are often the source of propositional knowledge. As tacit knowledge is an important aspect of all human interactions, it would be a mistake to deny its value within the interview setting. As a high-achieving mother, I certainly had "hunches", or insights, that could not be ignored.
pursued these intuitive hunches with additional questions and requests for clarification, and by directly “checking out” ideas with research participants.

4) **Qualitative methods.** Qualitative methods are preferred in naturalistic inquiry since they are more inductive and flexible than their quantitative counterparts. They are also more adaptable for use with multiple constructed realities than are quantitative methods and account more readily for the influence of the researcher in the environment under study. In this study, qualitative methods were most able to achieve the goal of uncovering the complexities of women’s experiences in their roles.

5) **Purposive sampling.** Within the naturalistic paradigm, purposive sampling involves selecting information-rich cases (Patton, 1990) that clearly illustrate the phenomenon under investigation. As opposed to random sampling, which attempts to promote generalizability of results, purposive sampling is a means toward increased scope and depth of information. I attempted to construct a diverse, but focused sample for this study. A specific cohort, which included married women from ages 25 to 40 who possessed or were in the
process of attaining doctoral or M.D. degrees and had at least one young biological child, were the focus of this study. Diversity was sought through dialogues with women of various ethnic and racial backgrounds, as well as women from a variety of academic disciplines and professional fields.

6) **Inductive data analysis.** Through the use of inductive analysis, a qualitative researcher seeks to explore data and to seek patterns that logically emerge. In contrast to testing theoretically derived (deductive) hypotheses, inductive inquiry is more likely to illuminate multiple realities, influences, and settings. Despite issues of ambiguity that may arise, this method will ultimately lead to better transferability of patterns to similar contexts. In Chapter 4 of this document, through careful data analysis and interpretation, I will attempt to construct meanings, definitions, and patterns. I also will provide richly descriptive examples of participants and concepts so that other researchers may evaluate the appropriateness of transferring my theoretical conclusions to other contexts.
7) **Grounded theory.** In the naturalistic paradigm, good theory is that which is grounded in the data. It should emerge from what is really going on in the data and not be predetermined by existing theoretical concepts and principles. The grounded theory method is used to discover or develop theory from existing data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is a reflexive process that is responsive to contextual values and theoretical constructs that emerge from the data. It is also an interpretive methodology that includes the perspectives and voices of the research participants. The resulting theory is, thus, grounded in the data and is usually more complex and encompassing than theory developed and tested through more traditional, quantitative means.

A critical component of grounded theory is that of theoretical sensitivity, as discussed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Theoretical sensitivity is defined as “the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 42). I strive for theoretical sensitivity
through familiarity with relevant literature, personal and professional experience, and through close relationships with the participants and data.

Qualitative research uses principles of inductive logic in data analysis and theory development. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), grounded theory "is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon (p. 23)." In other words, without predetermined expectations on the data, inductive analysis starts with specific observations and builds toward general patterns. Data is subsequently collected based upon these patterns, and the cycle continues. For the purposes of this study, participants' experiences with their work and family roles will be examined without predetermined categories. Before aggregating data, I will seek full understanding of each participant's experience.

The works of Carol Gilligan (1982), Baruch and others (1983), Belenky and others (1986), Ruthellen Josselson (1987, 1996), Daniel Levinson (1996), Nancy Betz (1993), and numerous other authors that focus on the career and
identity development of women inform this research. It was a challenge to use my familiarity and understanding of their theories and concepts to enhance, rather than to block or blind, the development of new theoretical constructs. My own experiences as a professional woman and new mother have also fueled my interest in this research. Although I bring my personal experiences to my work, I am careful not to assume that my values, beliefs, and experiences match those of my study participants.

8) **Emergent design.** Although the initial research design will be clearly outlined in the pages that follow, it was allowed to unfold and change in a way that was consistent with emergent data. According to Patton (1990):

> Qualitative inquiry designs cannot be completely specified in advance of fieldwork. While the design will specify an initial focus, plans for observations and interview, and primary questions to be explored, the naturalistic and inductive nature of the inquiry makes it both impossible and inappropriate to specify operational variables, state testable hypotheses, and finalize either instrumentation or sampling schemes. A qualitative design unfolds as fieldwork unfolds (p. 61).

It is impossible to accurately predict where the interactions between myself, the participants, and the phenomenon in question would lead; therefore, new directions for research were welcome. The interview schedule was revised, for example, as new data were
gathered and patterns emerged. Follow-up discussions were also flexible in nature, created to expand on interesting ideas, intuitive hunches, or common themes that emerged from initial interviews.

9) **Negotiated outcomes.** In the naturalistic paradigm, meanings and interpretations are not the sole construction of the researcher. Instead, it is very important to seek the assistance of the participants in reviewing the researcher's interpretations of their words. Through this dynamic process, the researcher and participant negotiate and co-construct meanings from the data in order to create the most accurate representation of the participants' reality. Initially, I planned to offer participants the opportunity to review transcripts for editing. As data were analyzed, participants were also invited to provide feedback on the generation of meaning. Although this mutuality is ideal in theory, the impracticality of requesting even more time from an already very busy and sometimes overwhelmed group of women became quickly evident. Thus, I made special efforts to "check out" ideas, connections, and interpretations during the interview process.
10) Case study reporting mode. Case study reporting is the preferred mode because it allows for thick descriptions of complex, multiple constructed realities. It also permits the researcher to account for her own values, biases, and interactions, so that her influence may be examined in the context of the results. The presentation of these women’s lives through descriptive case studies illuminates the variety of mutually shaping influences present.

11) Idiographic interpretation. Within naturalistic inquiry, data interpretation and analysis proceed in terms of case particulars (idiographics), not in terms of abstract singular generalizations (nomothetics). It is unlikely that one single interpretation will fit the multiple experiences and realities present in the data. Idiographic interpretation permits complete consideration of the context relevant to each participant’s experiences of the phenomenon under study; in essence, the interaction between the phenomenon and the context are viewed holistically.

12) Tentative application. Naturalistic inquiry assumes that constructed meanings are influenced by factors operating within the specific contexts in which they occur.
To a large extent, for example, the outcomes of the study are dependent upon the interactions between the researcher and research participants. Therefore, the researcher must use caution in making broad applications of findings, since different contexts may lead to different outcomes. Issues of transferability are considered here, where the ability to transfer the theoretical formulations of the study to another context is contingent on the degree to which the contexts are similar. Descriptions of participants, acknowledgement of my biases, values, and theoretical presuppositions, and thick descriptions of data allow readers to make reasonable judgements of the applicability of these findings to other contexts.

13) Focus-determined boundaries. Within the naturalistic paradigm, participants help define the focus of the research throughout the research process. The researcher cannot fully determine the parameters for the inquiry without knowledge of important contextual factors; nor can they be rigidly set prior to interaction with participants. The boundaries and focus of this inquiry were set, and then re-set, on the basis of emerging data and multiple realities acquired through semi-structured interviews. The emergent nature of the focus permits
multiple realities to inform the focus of the study, and permits theory to unfold naturally and in a way that it is fully grounded in the data.

14) **Special criteria for trustworthiness.**

Conventional criteria for trustworthiness of positivistic research, such as internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity do not apply to naturalistic inquiry. They are replaced with more appropriate standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. As they relate to the research design of this study, these concepts will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

**Research Design and Methodology**

**Sampling and access.** Purposive sampling, as discussed previously, is an important characteristic of the naturalistic inquiry paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The rationale for purposive sampling lies in the selection of information rich cases for in-depth learning about issues pertinent to the research focus (Patton, 1990). Unlike in random selection procedures, participants were intentionally selected on the basis of their age, marital
status, educational level, professional experience, number and age of children, and their experiences with family and career decision-making.

The sample size for this study is ten women. This sample size is considered manageable for qualitative inquiry. It is small enough to permit in-depth case study analysis; yet, it is large enough to provide some diversity among participants and to enable interpretation of meanings, patterns, and definitions. Ideally, a goal of grounded theory is to sample your population until "theoretical saturation" is achieved. Due to time constraints and the scope of this study, however, sampling and data collection did not continue to the point of exhausting categories.

Participants are married women between 26 and 38 years of age and possess or are in the process of obtaining a doctoral or M.D. degree in any field. Participants also have at least one child under the age of six from their current marriages. I selected women based upon the recommendation of professional and academic colleagues, friends and family, and women with whom I am familiar from
professional and personal contacts. Recommendations were solicited and then evaluated to identify a diverse group of women who fit the sample characteristics.

Potential participants were contacted via phone or letter (see Appendices A and B) and explained the purpose of the study and the requirements of their participation, which include taped interviews and a one-year commitment to the project. All participants were assured confidentiality through pseudonyms and deletion of any identifying information. At the time of the interview, each participant signed a consent form (see Appendix C) to accept these terms of agreement.

Data collection methods. Data collection consisted of individual interviews of participants over a time span of approximately one year. This method was selected as an effective tool to gather in-depth information on each woman's experiences and to allow for follow-up data over an extended time period. Interviews took place at a time and place designated by the participant. They were audio taped and transcribed by the researcher, using slight modifications to ensure the utmost confidentiality. Pauses
and fillers such as "you know" and "um" were not deleted from transcripts, as they provided valuable information about the participant and her responses.

Interviews followed a semi-structured format as described by Michael Quinn Patton (1990). Principles of qualitative interviewing will be elaborated in the next section. The interview guide for this study is included in Appendix D. Draft versions of the interview guide were given to select women who fit the study sample characteristics, but were unable or unwilling to commit to the long-term study. They offered feedback about wording, clarity, quality, and overall content of the questions. They also made suggestions for additional questions based upon their own experiences with gender, work, and family roles. Feedback was incorporated into a final draft, which was used to guide all of the interviews. All interviews sought the same basic information on life goals, career decisions, employment, homemaking, marriage, children, and gender role ideology. There was flexibility to explore some topics more in depth if they seem particularly important to the participant's experience. While I planned
to follow the question set closely at the outset, I added and deleted questions in subsequent interviews to focus more narrowly on categories as they unfolded.

The interview guide (see Appendix D) focuses on how each woman defines her career and family roles and her process of negotiating those roles. Questions focus upon each woman’s vision of her life, her identity, her goals, and her future. They call for in-depth descriptions of her experiences of employment and homemaking/child rearing. They also elicit information about her relationships with her spouse and children, intimacy and satisfaction in the context of these relationships, conflict within these relationships, the influence of these relationships on identity and role development, and the influence on identity and role development on these relationships. Finally, the participant’s assumptions about gender roles and responsibilities are described in-depth through a series of questions.

Demographic data, including age, racial or ethnic background, level of education, occupation, husband’s occupation, and number and age of children were sought on a separate questionnaire at the end of the interview.
Qualitative Interviewing

Qualitative interviews are the main source of data collection in this study. According to Patton (1990), "the purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (p. 278). Kvale (1996) also writes that talking with people is the way to understand their world, life, views, and opinions. It is a tool that is used to understand the participants’ experiences and the meanings they attach to those experiences.

Kvale (1984) discusses 12 characteristics of a qualitative research interview. They were used to guide the interview process in this study. They are as follows:

1) The participant’s life-world is the subject of the interview. The goal is to provide a means for the participant to describe her life.

2) The interviewer attempts to describe and understand the meanings of the interviewee’s experiences as she expresses them.
3) The interviewer attempts to gather many descriptions of the various aspects of the participant’s life-world.

4) The interviewer seeks uninterpreted descriptions of what participants experience, where descriptions of motivation and underlying causes of experiences are withheld.

5) The interviewer facilitates descriptions of situations and experiences as they occur in the participant’s life, not just the participant’s opinions of the topic under investigation.

6) Rich and presuppositionless descriptions of the phenomena under investigation are sought in the interview process. This suggests a conscious openness on the part of the researcher to unexpected data without pre-set categories for interpretation.

7) The interview is focused on themes that are neither overly-strict, nor totally non-directive. Themes of this interview include, but are not limited to, views of self, description of a decision-making process, role description and function, life satisfaction, and gender ideology.
8) The interviewer clarifies meaning with participants as much as possible, especially when statements are ambiguous or open to numerous interpretation.

9) During an interview, participants may change their descriptions of or meanings about a theme.

10) Interviews may vary based upon the interviewer’s relationship to the topic and the participant.

11) The interview process is an interpersonal endeavor, whereby both the interviewer and interviewee are mutually influenced by one another. Interpersonal dynamics can be accounted for during the interview and data analysis processes.

12) The interview process can be a positive experience for the participant.

It should be noted that this study seeks interpreted descriptions of participants’ experiences with work and family roles. It also questions women about their motivation and the underlying causes of their career and life decisions. Thus, #4 as outlined above, is not a characteristic of this particular interview process.

Data management and analysis.

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a
linear fashion; it is not neat. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data; it builds grounded theory (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 127).

Although I write about data analysis as a separate category for the purposes of this chapter, it was done simultaneously with data collection, so that I was able to shape the study as it proceeded. I consistently reflected upon my data, attempted to organize them, tried to understand what these women described, and ultimately, to discover the story I wished to tell.

One procedure for analyzing data is commonly referred to as the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This approach lends itself well to the exploration of multiple contextual meaning-making. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) describe the constant comparative method as a process of joint coding and analysis of data to generate theory or to examine a variety of patterns in the data. Theory emerges from, and is thus grounded in, the data. The goal of the constant comparative method is suggesting many categories and hypotheses about general research problems; it is not to test hypotheses. Glaser and Strauss (1967) also describe this method as a means to "enable prediction and explanation of behavior" (p. 3). While this goal does not fit the underlying assumptions of
qualitative research, nor does it suit the aims of this study, their procedure provides a useful structure for analyzing data.

I began the process of constant comparative method by creating and trying out categories of meaning in the data, and coding incidents as examples of each category. Although I initially intended to use qualitative research software as a tool for analysis, I found that my thinking and writing style were not compatible with the available software; they did not provide the "big picture" I needed. Thus, I relied upon meticulous hand coding and recoding and a large bulletin board as my means for data analysis. By coding and re-coding data into as many categories as possible, the theoretical process began. While coding data for a category, it was compared with the previous data in the same category. Categories shifted and evolved as new data was gathered, or the data was reconsidered. During this process, I recorded ideas and wrote memos (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) on how the categories were created or re-created, ideas that pertained to the data, and any issues that arose. I also took dated photographs of the data bulletin board so that I could visually retrace the development of the categories and patterns.
The process of theory development continued during the second stage of the constant comparative method, whereby categories and their properties were integrated. As coding progressed, the units of comparison changed from a comparison of one incident with another to a comparison with the properties of a category within which it might fit. Categories were distinguished from and related to other categories; they ultimately became integrated into a unified whole, or theory. In this stage, I focused the study on the emerging categories so they may be clarified or expanded.

The third stage of constant comparison method is delimiting the theory through reduction of the theory and saturation of categories. This study did not reach this level of analysis, but it is helpful to understand the entire process nonetheless. Theory reduction occurs as categories become more clearly defined, and negative cases become fewer and fewer. The individual categories continue to be seen within a larger, broader, theoretical context. The researcher can further focus her data collection in a way that fits the emerging theory. Categories will eventually reach saturation, where additional data adds
little to the existing categories, and where no new categories can be generated from the data when new participants are added.

Writing theory is often seen as the culmination of research, but its purpose here was as a tool of discovery and analysis, or as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 1994). Through the maintenance of a reflexive journal, the writing process began early on in this study, and continued until the final draft of the dissertation was submitted. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), at the end of the analysis process, the researcher will have coded data, memos, and a theory. The idea, then, is to present substantive theory in a manner that clearly articulates its meaning through examples, while providing the reader with enough thick description for transferability decisions. The coded data, if well-organized, can be easily accessed during the final writing process.

Trustworthiness

Criteria for trustworthiness provide standards by which qualitative research can be conducted and evaluated. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four criteria of trustworthiness for qualitative inquiry. They are credibility, transferability, dependability, and
confirmability. I will now turn my attention to a
discussion of each aspect of trustworthiness and its
relationship to the design of this study.

**Credibility.** Standards of credibility in qualitative
research are parallel to, but more complex than, internal
validity standards of more traditional research.
Traditional research has defined internal validity “as the
extent to which a researcher’s observations and
measurements are true descriptions of a particular reality”
(Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, p. 151). Ideas of “true” and
“reality” are problematic within the qualitative paradigm.
Hence, the focus of credibility in naturalistic inquiry
focuses on the degree to which the researcher’s
construction of the participant’s reality matches the
participant’s actual construction. Credibility is awarded
when the constructions are plausible to those who
constructed them (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994).

Prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and
triangulation methods are activities that make it more
likely that credible findings and interpretations will be
produced (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Prolonged engagement
requires that the investigator engage in extended contact
with participants. It is “the investment of sufficient
time to achieve certain purposes: learning the 'culture', testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or of the respondents, and building trust” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). I attended to issues of credibility by spending as much time with participants as they would permit.

Next, where prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of persistent observation is to identify those characteristics and elements that are most relevant to the problem being pursued and focusing on them in detail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There is no single research site for this inquiry. Therefore, prolonged observation must occur before, during, and immediately following interview sessions. I paid close attention to how the participants interacted with their home or work environment, as well as their spouses and children that were in the near vicinity. Audiotapes and transcripts were closely studied so that I became intimately familiar with the data.

The technique of triangulation also improves the likelihood that findings and interpretations will be credible. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that triangulation includes the use of multiple and different
sources of data, methods of inquiry, investigators, and theories. Interviews provided the primary source of data for this study. I also used multiple theories of human development, gender studies, and women’s issues for a variety of perspectives on which the data was analyzed.

Peer debriefing is another technique useful in establishing credibility. It is “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). More simply put, this technique allows the researcher to test out ideas and findings with someone not invested in the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify multiple purposes of debriefing. Firstly, the process helps keep the researcher “honest” (p. 308) as the debriefer attempts to probe her biases, meanings, and interpretations. Secondly, debriefing provides the researcher the opportunity to test working hypotheses for plausibility. Thirdly, debriefing sessions provide the researcher the opportunity to discover, develop, and test next steps in the methodological design. Finally, debriefing provides the inquirer an occasion for catharsis, which is imperative
to maintain good judgement and stamina. I sought critical feedback and challenge on my research methods and data analysis through my dissertation advisor.

Negative case analysis encourages credibility through continuous refinement of a hypothesis until it accounts for all known cases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher tries and eliminates rival hypotheses and exceptions before settling on the one with the best "fit". Through the maintenance of a research journal, I engaged in the process of negative case analysis as data were gathered and analyzed. Although my goal was not to develop a hypothesis with zero exceptions, I attempted to generate explanations that reasonably fit these women's experiences.

Finally, member checks are seen by some as the most crucial tool for establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data, analytic categories, interpretation, and conclusions are tested with the participants from whom the original data was collected. Informal and formal member checks were intended in this study. The first three participant were asked to review transcripts of our interviews, so that changes or additions may be incorporated. Each of these participants refused this offer because of time constraints and already hectic lives.
Therefore, I tried to incorporate member checks into subsequent interviews. As data was analyzed, I did not seek to discuss potential findings with participants. Instead, I very carefully sought to capture the meaning of these women's stories and present them in a way that was consistent with their experiences. I realize that the resulting stories rely heavily upon my own meaning-making without final confirmation, and that this could be seen as a limitation of the study.

Transferability. Where in traditional research there is the issue of external validity, in naturalistic inquiry there is that of transferability. External validity is traditionally defined as the degree to which results can be accurately applied to other groups or contexts. Considering the nature of qualitative inquiry, this is not a realistic goal. Transferability is relative and depends on the similarity between the researched context and contexts to which the results are applied. Thus, I cannot assure external validity. I can only provide thick or detailed description to enable a reader to decide whether or not a transfer of results to another context is possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
**Dependability.** Although it is often compared to the conventional criterion of reliability, dependability is quite different. Dependability is the means by which "the researcher attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study as well as changes in the design created by increasingly refined understanding of the setting" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 145). Methodological changes within this study are well-documented so that an outside reviewer may understand the process that lead to methodological decisions.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability captures the traditional concept of objectivity (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). It is concerned with assuring that the findings are grounded in the data apart from the researcher, and are not simply created by the researcher. The major technique for establishing confirmability is the confirmability audit, whereby audio topes and field notes are maintained, data reduction and analysis products are on hand, and process notes are written and saved for review by a colleague (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Procedures for a confirmability audit will be closely followed in the study at hand.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also suggest keeping a reflexive journal as a method of establishing
confirmability. In this study, I maintained a journal to track my role in the research process, and to document the unfolding of the study. My journal was organized into observation notes (information from the senses), methodological notes (a to-do list), theoretical notes (hunches, ideas, connections), and personal notes (feelings and reactions) as recommended by Richardson (1994).

Ethics and Politics

Prior to data collection, I followed Ohio State University procedures for conducting research with human subjects and requested exemption from the Human Subjects Committee. Information was obtained through the use of interview procedures. Interviews were also recorded only with written consent and in a manner in which the anonymity of the subjects was strictly protected. Finally, all participants were over the age of 18.

In seeking research participants, I explained the purpose of the study and the requirements of participation. Written consent was obtained prior to the initiation of interviews (see Appendix C). The consent form included permission to audiotape all interviews. All tape recordings were transcribed by the researcher.
The anonymity of the participants was strictly
protected through pseudonyms of the participants, and by
removing any other identifying information (i.e., places of
work, spouses and children’s names, etc.) during the
transcription process.

I realize that the effects of this research on the
participants go far beyond the parameters of our time spent
together. Inevitably, participation in the interview
process, which asks women to discuss and evaluate their
lives, has some unforeseen effects on them. Therefore, I
provided my participants with limited resources, including
names, phone numbers, and web site addresses of services
and organizations, for follow-up if needed.

Finally, I did not ask friends, relatives, students,
or colleagues with whom I am well acquainted to participate
in this study. This reduced my bias toward the participant
and the data, and avoided potentially awkward situations
for participants.

Subjectivity

My own research reflects my subjectivity. My
purposes, research questions, methods, and writing style
all reflect who I am and where I come from. This
realization, however, does not excuse a lack of rigor or
inattention to empirical issues in my research. Issues of subjectivity and empirical concerns must be balanced throughout the entire research process—from the selection of a topic to the writing of the manuscript. In the next section I will address this balance through an exploration of how my research reflects my own subjectivity and how this subjectivity can complement empirical concerns. Finally, I will explore ways to monitor my subjectivity so as to capitalize on its benefits, and minimize its detriments to the quality of my dissertation research.

In purpose. The purpose of my research project is to better understand how high-achieving women make meaning of gender, career, and family roles, as well as how these meanings impact their life decisions, identity development, and life satisfaction. This focus stems from scholarly interests in the intersections of gender, women’s development, life patterns, and the well-being of women. It also grows from personal struggles with my own efforts to combine career and family roles. In essence, my research questions are inspired by my own experiences as a woman; they are personal and political in nature. Wolcott (1995) describes his respect for this kind of “bias.” He considers bias “entry level theorizing, a thought-about
position from which the researcher as inquirer feels drawn to an issue or problem and seeks to construct a firmer basis in both knowledge and understanding" (p. 186). Yet, it is critical that I do not allow my research to be simply about my experience. Smith (1987b) states:

Nor in proposing a sociology grounded in the sociologist’s actual experience, am I recommending the self-indulgence of inner exploration or any other enterprise with self as sole focus and object. Such subjectivist interpretations of ‘experience’ are themselves an aspect of that organization of consciousness which bifurcates it and transports us into mind country while stashing away the concrete conditions and practices upon which it depends. We can never escape the circles of our own heads if we accept that as our territory. Rather the sociologist’s investigation of our directly experienced world as a problem is a mode of discovering or rediscovering the society from within. She begins from her own original but tacit knowledge and from within the acts by which she brings it into her grasp in making it observable and in understanding how it works. She aims not at a reiteration of what she already (tacitly) knows, but at an exploration through that of what passes beyond it and is deeply implicated in how it is (pp. 92-93).

The methods I use to collect data, and the means I appropriate to analyze and write up those data, reflect in a fundamental sense the way I understand the world (Usher & Scott, 1996). Thus, my subjectivity is a large part of the methods I choose to use, as well as how I use them. I also accept that some qualitative methods are more robust than are others. Therefore, I must also be attuned to
empirical issues so that I am able to produce a realist narrative that most accurately gets at the meaning of women’s experiences and point of view.

**In methodology.** Naturalistic inquiry is the methodological paradigm I have chosen for my study; it best fits my research purpose as well as my assumptions about knowledge. As described earlier, the main axioms, or assumptions, underlying the naturalistic paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) describe the inevitable intersubjectivity between researcher and participants. As will be discussed in the next section, methodological choices and implementations within that paradigm are also inherently subjective.

**In data collection.** In choosing interviewing as the main means for gathering data in my study, I must understand what makes a “good interview.” Empirical concerns include developing rapport, writing and asking questions that are open-ended, asking question that get at the research purpose but are not overly restrictive, recording responses, etc. I also need to understand how who I am influences the questions I write, how I ask them, the responses that I receive, and how I hear those responses.
Entire volumes have been written on the role of subjectivity in the multitude of qualitative data collection methods (i.e., Ellis & Flaherty, 1992). Feminist researchers find interviewing appealing for several reasons. First, interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words. This is especially important for the study of women who have either been ignored or have been spoken for by men (Reinharz, 1992). Secondly, Kvale (1996) writes that talking with people is the way to understand the participants' experiences and the meanings they attach to those experiences.

Interviewing is viewed by some theorists, however, as a masculine paradigm. Oakley (1981) suggests three ways that traditional interviewing practice creates problems for feminist interviewers whose primary orientation is toward the validation of women's subjective experiences. Traditional criteria define the interview as a one-way process in which the interviewer elicits and receives, but does not give information. The rationale for why the interviewer must pretend not to have opinions is that behaving otherwise might 'bias' the interview. Such bias clearly invalidates the scientific claims of the research.
Secondly, is the attitude towards interviewees is as passive ‘respondents’ from which information is to be obtained in an ‘unbiased’ fashion. Thirdly, interviews are traditionally seen as having no personal meaning in terms of social interaction. The relationship between interviewer and interviewee is hierarchical in nature. It is the body of expertise possessed by the interviewer that allows the interview to be successfully conducted. Oakley (1981) states that “through the prism of our technological and rationalistic culture, we are lead to perceive and feel emotions as some irrelevancy or impediment to getting things done” (Oakley, p. 40). Also, emotions do not constitute “real science” of an objective and measurable nature; getting involved with the people you interview “is doubly bad: it jeopardizes the hard-own status of sociology as a science and is indicative of a form of personal degeneracy” (Oakley, 1981, p. 41).

Oakley (1981) suggests that the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and non-exploitative and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship. Part of encouraging women to regard the
researcher as more than just an instrument of data collection is to answer their questions. The other part is personal involvement—"the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives" (Oakley, 1981, p. 58).

In summary, the interview, once seen as a tool to be used, was a dialectical, reflexive encounter between the co-creators of knowledge in my research—myself and my participants. In this way, the interview effectively gets at my participants' experiences while avoiding as much as possible the subject-object relationship that characterizes many traditional interviews. This type of interview also allowed me to be "real" with my participants such that our encounter was genuine and open.

In data analysis. Data analysis and interpretation is no longer seen as a technical process of simply 'reading out' a meaning which was already there (Usher & Scott, 1996). Nor is data analysis and interpretation a process that is 'only' subjective interpretation, where one interpretation is just as valid as another. It is a delicate and deliberate balance of both processes. This balance involves getting as close as possible to understanding and describing another's perspective,
experiences, and reality. Certain techniques, such as analytic induction, can and are employed toward this goal. It is also important to understand that interpretation is a social act and the meaning that is read into the data is dependent on the paradigms and research traditions within which the researcher is located (Usher & Scott, 1996).

Interpretations are also influenced by the gender, race, class, and life experiences of the researcher. My study in particular stems from my own experiences as a high-achieving mother. The sample of women I seek to understand are very similar to myself; they are high-achieving, and currently face decisions regarding their career and family roles. Although this can be seen as an asset to my truly understanding their experiences, it also means that I should take special care in separating their realities from mine, so that I do not interpret their words only in a way that reflects my own life. As I will discuss later, it was important for me to closely monitor my subjectivity throughout the data analysis and interpretation process.

In summary, an awareness of my situatedness as I gathered and made sense of data using empirical methods is critical to the telling of a story that is not just about
me. No matter how aware one is, however, the process of analysis and interpretation of another's words and experiences will always be an act of power. Usher and Scott (1996) write:

It is this which makes the researcher the 'great interpreter' with privileged access to meaning. The seemingly neutral procedures and rules of validation that legitimate research conclusions and make interpretation simply a matter of drawing out a pre-existent meaning can be seen as a way of imposing an abstract order on the complexity, confusion and struggles of life as they are researched. Even in ethnographic and critical theory research, both of which consciously attempt to move away from the technicised model of the research process, the researcher's imposition of an abstract order is still an act of power (Usher & Scott, 1996, p. 177).

In writing. Feminist scholars are highly conscious of the absence of women's voices in research reports and charge that preparing the account in the usual distant, neutral, objective social science modes only replicates hierarchical conditions found in the parent discipline (Smith, 1987). To understand the everyday world of women as it is known by women demands a high degree of reflexivity from the feminist qualitative researcher (Olesen, 1994). As such, reflexivity is a "performed politics", and the means of overcoming the gendered character of supposedly value-free objective discourse (Marcus, 1994).
What is required is sufficient reflexivity to uncover the researcher's views, thinking, and conduct—or subjecivity (Olesen, 1994). The feminist scholar does not, then, hide her identification from the reader. Instead, she positions herself in her writing as no longer transparent, but as a classed, gendered, raced, and sexual subject who constructs her own locations, narrates these locations, and negotiates her stance with relations of domination (Fine, 1994, Usher & Edwards, 1994). Thus, reflexivity involves finding out about ourselves' and including what we find out in the stories we tell. Manning (1995) states that "this may mean playful adjustment of perspective, of subject/observer roles, or modes of presenting materials. Such new modes should not obviate an ability to set ethnographic questions and the ethnographic moment in broader political, economic, and historical perspective" (p. 250).

One goal of reflexivity is that it directs us to understand ourselves as persons writing from particular positions at specific times; it frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said to everyone. Nurturing our own voices releases the "censorious hold of 'science writing' on our consciousness,
as well as the arrogance it fosters in our psyche" (Richardson, 1994, p. 518). Therefore, the researcher appears to us not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests (Harding, 1987a, p. 3). As the researcher discloses herself and shares her story through her own 'voice', she invites the reader to identify with her. Secondly, through reflexivity, the researcher addresses the reader directly and creates a connection through her between the reader and the people studied (Reinharz, 1992). Thirdly, the purpose of reflexivity is to uncover the research process. There should be clear 'tracks' indicating the researcher's thoughts and methodological decisions (Altheide & Johnson, 1994). The inquirer herself is placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter and the behaviors of the researcher herself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she attempts to paint. Such processes increase our confidence in the findings, interpretations, and accounts offered (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Harding, 1987a).

There has been a strong tendency to regard reflexivity as a major epistemological 'problem.' Moreover, it has
generally been considered a problem to be avoided because it supposedly influences or ‘contaminates’ the status of research outcomes as “truthful representations and valid knowledge-claims” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 148). Critics often question if reflexive research and writing can ever be a truthful representation. In other words, they ask: “are we as researchers researching the world, or ourselves as makers of knowledge-claims? Can research ever be anything more than a subtle form of writing the self?” (Usher & Scott, 1996, p. 148).

Usher and Scott (1996) argue that by foregrounding how we construct what we research, reflexivity is no longer a problem, but a resource. It helps us to recognize that we are a part of rather than apart from the world constructed through research. Writing that relies upon reflexivity does not mean that research reports will become no more than a researcher’s autobiography. In this way, reflexivity is not simply confined to the personal. It does, however, reveal to the reader where the researcher’s values and standpoints influence the choice of subject being researched, how the research is carried out, and how ‘data’ is generated and evaluated (Usher & Edwards, 1994).
Representation requires a balance of my own voice and story with my participants' voices and stories. Feminist writing, which is reflexive in nature, honors this tension and balance. Lincoln (1995) summarized the necessity of reflexivity by stating:

... reflexivity is absolutely required to understand one's psychological and emotional states before, during, and after the research experience. Such reflexivity or subjectivity enables the researcher to begin to uncover dialectic relationships, array and discuss contradictions within the stories being recorded, and more with research participants toward action. Thus the words transformative and critical not only embody the action aspects of research, but also recognize the ability of meaningful research experiences to heighten self-awareness in the research process and create personal and social transformation (p. 283).

In summary, writing feminist research poses issues of subjectivity, voice, and representation. Clandinin and Conelly (1994) eloquently describe this dilemma, stating: "This struggle for research voice is captured by the analogy of living on a knife's edge as one struggles to express one's own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to capture the participants' experience and represent their voices, all the while attempting to create a research text that will speak to, and reflect upon, the audience's voices" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 423-24).
Monitoring subjectivity.

Whatever the substance of one’s persuasions at a given point, one’s subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17).

It is rather apparent that qualitative feminist researchers find criticisms about researcher subjectivity to be misplaced. Feminist researchers see subjectivity, or ‘situatedness’, as a valuable resource that can guide data gathering and interpretations (Olesen, 1994). Careful scrutiny of the inquirer's history, values, and assumptions are critical to a feminist ethnography (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Schwandt, 1994). Strouse (1988) also adds that all emotional responses that you have during the research process are important parts of the work. In this way, “Understanding of self is not narcissism, it is a precondition and a concomitant condition to the understanding of others” (Pinar, 1988, p. 159) (c.f. Casey, 1995).

Although most social scientists claim in general that subjectivity is invariably present in their research, they are not necessarily conscious of it. In other words, they do not attend to their subjectivity in a meaningful, productive way (Peshkin, 1988). One’s subjectivity has the capacity not only to enable but also to disable.
Therefore, researchers should systematically identify their subjectivity through the course of their research (Peshkin, 1988). This process enables the researcher to be aware of how her subjectivity may be shaping her inquiry and its outcomes. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) state that the condition for grasping the place of subjectivity in one's research "relates to a personal encounter with self in the course of research. Aware that there is something to seek, to uncover, and to understand about yourself, you are ready to be informed through the research experience" (pp. 100-101).

The goals of searching out one's subjectivity are many and diverse. First, reflection helps a researcher to avoid the trap of untamed sentiments and presenting a study that has become blatantly autobiographical (Peshkin, 1988). This activity also tames the urge of presenting a study that has assumed an 'authorized' voice (Peshkin, 1988). One can also avoid what Marcus (1994) refers to as "positioning" in which reflexivity is reduced to a formulaic incantation at the beginnings of ethnographic papers in which one boldly 'comes clean' and pronounces a positioned identity (e.g. "I am a white, Jewish, middle-class, heterosexual female"). Generally, researchers can
learn about their own qualities that “have the capacity to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination in a written statement” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17). In this way, you purposefully use subjectivity in its most virtuous capacity while minimizing its negative potential.

Peshkin (1988) offers a valuable example of how he pursued his subjectivity in his Riverview High School research. He describes: “I looked for the warm and the cool spots, the emergence of positive and negative feelings, the experiences I wanted more of or wanted to avoid, and when I felt moved to act in roles beyond those necessary to fulfill my research needs. In short, I felt that to identify my subjectivity, I had to monitor myself to sense how I was feeling” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 18). Peshkin engaged in a “subjectivity audit” (p. 18), which resulted in a list of discretely characterized I’s that constituted his whole self. The list includes (a) the Ethnic-Maintenance I; (b) the Community-Maintenance I; (c) the E-Pluribus-Unum I; (d) the Justice-Seeking I; (e) the Pedagogical-Meliorist I; and (f) the Nonresearch Human I. It is important to note that these I’s emerged under the
particular circumstances of the study-at-hand (Peshkin, 1988). That I’s may change from place to place Peshkin calls ‘situational subjectivity’. By this concept he suggest that though we bring all of ourselves—our full complement of subjective I’s—to each new research site, a site and its particular conditions will elicit only a subset of our I’s (Peshkin, 1988).

Krieger (1985) also proposes that insights about an observer’s self can prove useful for understanding who are the subjects of sociological inquiry. She argues that we have much to learn from close examination of the interrelationship between observer and observed. She also proposes that “We are not, in fact, ever capable of achieving the analytic ‘distance’ we have long been schooled to seek. While recognition of the interactional and contextual nature of social research is not new, how we interpret ourselves during this new period of self-examination may, in fact, add something fresh and significant to the development of sophistication in social science” (Krieger, 1985, p. 309).

Krieger (1985) also proposes “becoming in touch” with data in a very methodically, highly disciplined and structured fashion. Krieger’s The Mirror Dance: Identity
in a Women's Community (1983) was a study of a Midwestern lesbian social group to which she had been a member for a year. Initially, she had not planned to study the community, but eventually she decided there was a story to be told. Krieger struggled with the separation and connection to her data that is inherent in qualitative inquiry of such a personal nature. Kreiger's (1985) account describes an exercise that helped her to "separate out" a sense of herself and to find her voice.

The first stage Krieger describes is a step-by-step “process of reengagement”. It includes an analysis of her overall experience of involvement in the community, beginning with entry, progressing through entanglements in personal relationships, singling out key events and emotional responses to them, reviewing the interview period, and ending with her feelings upon leaving. The second stage, a case-analytic technique deals more specifically with each interview. I will outline each step as Krieger (1983) proposed them.

Step 1: Preinterview Self-assessment. During this step, Krieger recalled her acquaintance with each interviewee prior to her interview and how each interview had been made. Most importantly, she noted her personal
expectations with respect to each interviewee. Through this process, she sought to identify those prejudices she brought to each interview.

*Step 2: Interview Self-assessment.* The goal for Krieger, again, was to identify prejudices and any "hidden agenda" she might have by recapturing her emotions during the interview. She found this to be a difficult process stating, "...I had to discipline myself to note a reaction of my own for every action of each interviewee that I noted. I had to take time to figure out the logic of my own reactions, for what they would tell me about barriers to dealing with my data. I had not expected the interview assessment to become highly self-analytic, since I felt that I had already been extremely self-reflective during the earlier stage of engaging with the entire research experience" (Krieger, 1985, p. 315). Krieger found that her feelings in this step were so strong because she shared an intimate identity stake with the women she interviewed. She states, "I looked to them, even in the ostensibly other-oriented interview situation, to help me solve the problem of who I was" (Krieger, 1985, p. 316).

*Step 3: Analyzing the Interview Notes.* This task deals with the actual content of the interview notes. Although
Krieger wanted to treat the accounts of her interviewees as separate from her own, she found herself comparing what the interviewees shared with her own experiences with the lesbian community.

In summary, Peshkin (1988) and Krieger (1985) offer methods through which inquirers can critically see through their subjectivity. Through such critical reflexivity, researchers are able to articulate the perspective they are taking and begin to see through the distortions that arise through the bias of their personal and class position (Reason, 1994).

**Monitoring my subjectivity.**

My subjectivity is the basis for the story that I am able to tell. It is a strength on which I build. It makes me who I am as a person and as a researcher, equipping me with the perspectives and insights that shape all that I do as a researcher, from the selection of topic clear through to the emphases I make in my writing. Seen as virtuous, subjectivity is something to capitalize on rather than to exorcise (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 104).

The goal of my research is to understand how women make decisions about family and work as a woman who is grappling with these dilemmas—the fact that I chose this topic is clearly based upon my own experiences. Thus, subjectivity has already played a major role in my research. As a woman I come to my research with
preconceived notions about motherhood, education, work, and
gender. It was imperative that I understand and keep track
of what I bring to my research, and how my assumptions
changed after experiences with my participants.
Subjectivity affected my research in the questions I asked,
how I heard the responses, my emotional reactions to my
participants, providing personal information to my
participants, and eventually, writing up my research for an
audience.

Throughout the research process, I kept a journal as
recommended by Richardson (1994) to organize observation
notes (information from the senses), methodological notes
(a to-do list), theoretical notes (hunches, ideas,
connections), and personal notes (feelings and reactions).
In the personal notes I monitored my subjectivity in
several ways based upon recommendations of Kreiger (1985)
and Peshkin (1988). First, I fleshed out the assumptions,
bias, and experiences that I brought to my research,
similar to how Peshkin (1998) defined his “I’s”. As did
Krieger (1985), I also monitored my thoughts and feelings
about participants prior to each interview (i.e., concerns,
fears, ideas, etc.); immediately following the interview, I
added thoughts, reactions, and feelings about the interview
itself; and, as I analyzed the interview transcripts I took carefull note of my reactions, especially about how the data confirmed or disconfirmed my initial assumptions. Finally, I will note of data in my everyday life experiences that were relevant to my research topic such as media depictions, conversations with friends, and my own struggles with my decisions. That which I discovered about myself and my role in the research process became part of the final written manuscript so that I could communicate my subjectivity to my audience—the essence of reflexivity.

Conclusion.

We cannot rid ourselves of the cultural self we bring with us into the field any more than we can disown the eyes, ears and skin through which we take in our intuitive perceptions about the new and strange world we have entered (Scheper-Hughes, 1992 p. 28).

This section explored issues of subjectivity within the context of my research on the experiences, identity development, and life choices of high-achieving women. My efforts have further illuminated the critical role of subjectivity in my research. First, social research is always valued research (Usher & Scott, 1996). It is more clear to me now that I cannot rid myself of my "cultural self", or my femaleness, Whiteness, and middle-classness; any research I conduct reflects these positions. Thus,
subjectivity is not something that I can avoid. It is an inherent part of any research project—from its inception to its final written form.

Furthermore, subjectivity, once heralded as the demise of qualitative research, can certainly be seen as an asset in many ways. Firstly, a respect for subjectivity disrupts white male research paradigms that have dominated the social sciences. Secondly, subjectivity seen as an asset to research opens up fresh new avenues for discovery that were once ignored. Research that comes from women’s experiences and is conducted by women for women, for example, would not be undertaken if ‘objectivity’ were of primary concern.

Subjectivity plays an intrinsic part of research. Firstly, the topic and questions I selected come from personal experience; thus, this study has personal meaningfulness and significance. The study stems from scholarly, political, and personal interests, which are often difficult to separate. As a young professional woman of childbearing age I, too, wrestle with the meanings of gender, career, and family in my own life. Although this may be seen as “researcher bias” and a weakness of the study, my own location within my topic affords me a unique
insight into my participants' experiences. This subjectivity also creates a relationship of reciprocity, between the women I study and myself, of mutual sharing and learning. Therefore, not only will I contribute to the extant literature on women's development through my research; I will also reap personal benefits by learning from the wisdom and experiences of the women I study. Secondly, the methods and design I employ are based upon the assumptions of naturalistic inquiry, selected because its main tenants most closely fit my own assumptions about knowledge and research. Finally, issues of representation—fostering a multi-voiced text that is true to my participants' experiences, my own voice, and the social nature of the research process—calls for reflexivity in my research and writing.

In summary, subjectivity can be seen as an asset to my research purposes, how I define my research questions, the research process itself, and my communication of the "results" to my audience. The information I gather through close monitoring of my subjectivity are part of my data, analysis, and final manuscript. Thus, through conscious and systematic monitoring of my own subjectivity in a
project that is relevant to my own life, I avoid being self-serving and "non-scientific", and capitalize on the virtuous aspects of my subjectivity.

Limitations of Research Design

One easily predicted limitation of this inquiry is that it is narrowly focused on a very specific group of women. It will not capture the diversity of life experiences of all women, such as single or divorced women, lesbian women, non-professional women, women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, or women of varying ages. While the research results may have implications for some women, the reader must decide for oneself the appropriateness of transferring the results to another context.

Another possible limitation is the length of the study. It is quite possible that one year is not enough to truly understand transition, or the impact of role choices on one's life. Due to time and financial constraints, however, this study must have reasonable time boundaries. It is my intention to follow-up with the women in the study every two years over a ten-year span.

In conclusion, the goal of this qualitative study is to engage in discourse with a group of highly educated
women in order to understand their processes of decision-making and to uncover themes regarding their experiences of themselves in relation to work, family, and gender. Although this study will undoubtedly lead to important discoveries and conclusions, the results, as with all other research, are limited to the time and place of the study. Even as I write this, the women in the study have grown, their circumstances have changed, the world around them has evolved, and they have experienced themselves in a new way; thus, a unique, and equally true, story could be told.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented in this chapter. Following short biographies of the research participants and a brief description of each interview, findings are organized into four major sections entitled (1) Constructions of Self; (2) Nature of Roles; (3) Tension; and (3) Alignment: Making It Work. Each section contains numerous subsections through which it is expanded and developed. Categories of constructions of self, nature of roles, conflict, and alignment are blurred and non-static. They are separated here to illustrate patterns and themes. The relationships among categories will be explored in Chapter Five.

Consistent with the axioms and characteristics of Naturalistic inquiry (described in Chapter Three), I will provide the reader with sufficient ‘thick description’ to
illustrate the theoretical constructs that emerged from the data. Extensive use of quotes from data will also allow readers to determine the transferability of these findings to other women and settings. I will also make a special attempt to address my standpoint and subjectivity in my experience and understanding of the research findings.

The Participants

In selecting a sample for the study, I sought diversity in terms of age (26-38) and race or ethnicity. As described in earlier chapters, all of the women were married, had biological children, and either possessed or was in the process of obtaining a Ph.D. or M.D. in any field or specialty. One participant, “Teresa”, has an M.B.A. This interview was meant to be a pilot interview, but I found our conversation to be so compelling that I could not bear to omit her from the actual study.

The entire research sample is more thoroughly described in Chapter Three. A summary of participant demographic characteristics can be found in Table One of this chapter. Next, a short biographical profile on each participant, with details omitted or masked to protect
anonymity, is provided for a more holistic picture of each woman. The context and setting of each interview is also described.

Biographies

Teresa

My first interview was to take place on a Saturday afternoon at the home of a mother of two. I found Teresa sitting on a front porch swing of her modest two-story home. She was drinking a wine cooler because she was “a little nervous.” She offered me one, but I declined, even though I was a bit nervous too. A pig-tailed little girl, Teresa’s daughter, was jumping rope on the front walk. We settled into our conversation and were only occasionally interrupted by the charming antics of the little girl. Despite my best efforts to make Teresa feel comfortable, she appeared to be nervous throughout the interview. When I asked her about it, she attributed it to the topic at hand, and how it stirred up the internal conflict she had, until now, kept buried beneath a busy family life.

Teresa describes her career decisions as a young woman in terms of her difficult childhood. She states that she received little affection as a child; therefore, when she became involved with her first boyfriend, she sought to
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Work Status</th>
<th>Spouse's Work Status</th>
<th>Children/Ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M.B.A.</td>
<td>home f/t&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>f/t lawyer</td>
<td>1 &amp; 3 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>home f/t</td>
<td>f/t lawyer</td>
<td>2 yrs., 5 mos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>M.D.</td>
<td>home f/t</td>
<td>f/t resident</td>
<td>4 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhu</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>M.D.</td>
<td>home f/t</td>
<td>f/t physician</td>
<td>5 yrs., 2 mos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>p/t&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; psychologist</td>
<td>Ph.D. candidate</td>
<td>1 1/2 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladys</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>p/t counselor</td>
<td>Ph.D. candidate</td>
<td>1 &amp; 4 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nzingha</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>f/t student; p/t grad assistant</td>
<td>f/t student</td>
<td>9 mos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabel</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Ph.D. Cand.</td>
<td>home f/t</td>
<td>f/t lawyer</td>
<td>8 mos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M.D.</td>
<td>f/t resident</td>
<td>f/t physician</td>
<td>7 mos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>White/Indian</td>
<td>M.D.</td>
<td>f/t physician</td>
<td>f/t physician</td>
<td>7 yrs., 2 mos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup> f/t = full-time;  <sup>2</sup> p/t = part-time

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of research participants
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fulfill her affection needs through him. She started college as an accounting major, but then switched to finance because it meant that she could graduate sooner and “get out of the house” to marry her high school sweetheart. After her marriage, she went on for her M.B.A. Shortly thereafter, Teresa had her first child and took a three-month maternity leave from her job. She went back to work part-time for a short time, and after serious misgivings about her childcare provider, quit her job and has been home full-time since. Today Teresa is still married and has two healthy children. Teresa spoke openly about her problems with self-esteem and the daily doubts she has about the decisions she’s made for herself and her family. At the same time, she reflects upon her very satisfying marriage and her love for her children.

Lynn

I nervously rang the doorbell of a quaint, two-story home in what appeared to be a quiet, middle-class, newer suburban neighborhood. Lynn, an attractive, casually dressed 32-year-old White woman answered the door with a smile. As I entered, I was immediately hit by the smell of
food cooking from the back of the house—later I found out it was home-made soup. There was no baby in sight (or sound).

Lynn offered me something to drink and then casually motioned me to the couch of her living room. She sat down next to me on the same couch, cross-legged and facing me. I slipped off my shoes and took the same cross-legged position so that we could make eye contact. I wedged my tape recorder between the couch seat cushions and we began the interview. Lynn's easy-going manner was contagious. Our talk was casual but enlightening, sprinkled with irresistible tangents and talk about babies, breast pumps, and home-made soup. At one point in the interview, I stirred the soup while Lynn fetched her awakened baby from upstairs. Half of our conversation took place while Lynn breastfed, burped, and played with her adorable little girl.

Lynn was raised in what she calls a "traditional" household. Her father, a banker and woodworker, was the primary financial provider for her family; her mother, a superb cook, was the primary caregiver for Lynn and her siblings and did not work outside the home. Growing up,
Lynn always wanted to be a doctor. She majored in chemistry as an undergraduate, took a few years off to earn money, and then completed medical school.

Today, Lynn is married to an American-born Chinese army physician—her second marriage. She has one very healthy biological daughter from this marriage who is nine months old. A second-year resident physician at a Midwestern university hospital, Lynn works long hours, some nights, and occasional weekends. Her daughter is in a small private day care during the week while she and her husband are at work. Lynn discusses her life choices and roles as physician, mother, and spouse at times with ease, and at other times in an obviously conflicted manner.

Gladys

Gladys heard about my dissertation topic and then sought me out. She said that she wanted to talk to me so that she could "share her experiences with other women." Upon discovery that she fit well within the parameters of my participant characteristics, I gratefully agreed to interview Gladys. We met on a cold winter afternoon in an empty office of her place of work. Gladys was visibly anxious to get started, as she had a lot to say.
Gladys is a 33 year-old woman from Peru. She grew up in Peru where she obtained a B.A. in Education, teacher certification, and her first professional experiences in education. Gladys became very interested in the area of counseling, but knew that Peru did not offer graduate training in that area. Therefore, soon after she married her husband in 1993, both of them moved to the United States in pursuit of graduate education.

Currently, Gladys has a Ph.D. in counselor education and works part-time as a counselor at a large Midwestern university. Her husband, a graduate student and Fullbright scholar, is in the final stages of his doctorate and works part-time. Gladys and her husband have two children; they are ages four and one. While Gladys and her husband are at school or work, their children are in day care. The couple shares most other childcare and home responsibilities.

Gladys spoke passionately about her role as mother. She tearfully expressed to me that she is unable to put into words what her children mean to her. She also finds great satisfaction in her career, stating that her two roles are intertwined and complement each other. Although Gladys expresses some degree of exhaustion in keeping up
with her and her family's hectic schedules she reports more contentment with her life than any of the other participants.

Nzingha

At age 18, Nzingha had it all planned out. She would be married by the time she was 24, she would have her first child by the time she was 25, and she was going to be a doctor. What Nzingha did not plan was the tension that these three roles would present when she tried to live them out simultaneously. Nzingha is now 26 years old, married, has her child, and is about to take her general exams for her doctorate. She is also separated from her husband and plans to relinquish custody of her baby following her divorce. Nzingha, although vibrant and confident, speaks with obvious pain and exhaustion of her efforts to manage her family and career lives. She expresses anger at her non-supportive husband and society in general for setting up expectations for women that cannot be realistically achieved.

Nzingha is an attractive 26-year-old African American woman. Our conversation was filled with everything from laughter to sociological theory, making it by far the most interesting. My interview with Nzingha was also the most
challenging. Personally, I was very pregnant, sick with the flu, and uncomfortable during our three-hour conversation. More importantly, the content of our interview challenged my abilities to withhold judgment. In essence, Nzingha spoke to me about giving up custody of her baby following an inevitable divorce from her husband so that she could pursue her academic and career goals. What she did not know was that she was speaking to someone who had recently lost two pregnancies and desperately wanted to be a mother. Needless to say, it was difficult to keep my own feelings in check throughout the interview and in later analysis of her responses.

Katherine

My interview with Katherine took place at my kitchen table. Katherine has a Ph.D. in nutrition. Presently, she is a full-time at home mother of two biological children. She is married to an attorney who works outside the home full time. I was visibly eight months pregnant and our interview was speckled with words of advice from this seasoned mother of two.

At age 18, Katherine wanted to be a physician. She believed, however, that her career goals were in conflict with her family goals. She wanted to marry and have a
large family; she also wanted to stay home with her children. Therefore, Katherine decided not to go to medical school; instead, she chose to pursue a graduate degree in nutrition. Katherine completed her Ph.D. and that same month gave birth to her first child. Outside of some part-time research work with her graduate advisor, Katherine stays home full time with her two children. She plans to someday return to the field of nutrition, but does not know when. She is also unsure of what it will be like to re-enter the field after an extended absence. Katherine expresses much contentment with her roles as mother and wife. She sees putting off her career as a very small sacrifice compared with the joy she finds in being home with her children.

Maria

Maria is originally from Venezuela. When she was in high school, her parents decided to move to the United States for better work opportunities. Maria, at age 17, knew that she wanted to go to medical school and was also aware that the cost of medical school in the United States would be a great burden on her family. Therefore, she decided to separate from her parents and stay in Venezuela for public medical education. Maria started medical school
at age 18. A typical M.D. degree in Venezuela is six years, but because of economic crises that force public schools to shut down completely, it took her nine years to graduate. During this time, Maria met her future husband who was also a medical student. They married and had their daughter one year later. After a planned cesarean-section and ten days of maternity leave, Maria finished the last nine months of her medical education. Three years ago, Maria, her husband and her then one-year-old daughter moved to a large Midwestern city where her husband began a medical residency in family practice. According to Maria’s estimation, her husband is away from home approximately 80 hours per week. Maria stays home full time to care for her family; she recently started studying to take her medical boards and hopes to take them in six months.

Our interview took place at the kitchen table in Maria’s apartment. Maria was incredibly gracious, offering me water, then tea, and then lunch. Her adorable four year-old daughter watched “Blues Clues” in the adjoining room, and occasionally interrupted our conversation to speak to her mother, ask to “go potty”, or to request a change in T.V. channels. At the time of the interview I
was visibly eight months pregnant. Again, I found our conversation to be filled with unsolicited, but welcome, advice from this experienced mother.

Maria is a striking woman who speaks fluid English. She talks openly about the internal conflict she feels about wanting to be at home for her daughter and also wanting to pursue her career as a physician. Maria frequently uses the word "completeness" to describe the state she seeks, but has not yet achieved.

Angela

One Saturday morning, Angela left her one year-old daughter in the care of her husband to come to my home for our interview. My own seven month-old was out-of-sight (but not out of sound) with her dad in our house. During our interview, I discovered that our meeting was only the third time Angela had left her child outside of her part-time work schedule. I felt very grateful; but I also felt a bit rushed to return Angela to the company of her daughter.

Angela is a 37 year-old White woman. She has a Ph.D. in psychology and works on a multidisciplinary medical team as a part-time psychologist. She is also the mother of one healthy biological daughter. Angela's husband is a Ph.D.
candidate in the throws of dissertation-writing. Therefore, Angela maintains full responsibility for the family's income at this time.

Angela seems to be very content in her efforts to manage and fulfill her career and family goals. She says that she has "the best of both worlds" in that she loves motherhood and finds great satisfaction in her career. Her only desire is to spend more time with her daughter. While Angela is at work, her daughter is in a small private daycare, of which Angela speaks very highly. It is her hope that when her husband completes his Ph.D. and finds a job, she can "go even more part-time" to be with her daughter. But at this time, Angela feels that because of her family's financial needs, she does not have a choice and must maintain her 30-hour per week work schedule.

Madhu

Madhu invited me to her home for our interview. She answered the door with a sleeping newborn in her arms and in a hushed tone showed me to her living room. While Madhu put her baby to bed, I had a moment to set up and look around. I immediately noticed the ethnic Indian art and décor of the home. I also saw a woman—a housekeeper—busying herself in the second floor loft.
Madhu returned and our interview got started. Madhu is a 35 year-old Indian woman who is a mother of two biological children and a full-time physician. She explained to me that for an undetermined amount of time she is presently on maternity leave. Madhu’s husband, also Indian, is a physician and practices full-time. Although she loves to be with her baby, Madhu expresses great discontent and boredom in being at home. She is anxious to return to the practice of medicine, her true passion, before she loses her skills.

As a child of two professional parents, Madhu never questioned her ability to manage her career and family lives in the future. Thus, she chose her career path based only upon what matched her interests and abilities, not on her future family’s needs. She and her husband alternate their educational commitments (i.e., fellowship) so that they will both eventually accomplish their career goals. Although she feels that they are managing quite well, Madhu does express some concerns about childcare.

**Isabel**

After briefly explaining to a new acquaintance of mine the topic of my dissertation, she exclaimed, “I know someone that would be PERFECT for your study! She’ll be in
town next week. I'm sure she would love to talk with you.” This was very typical of my participant recruitment. If women did not want to talk to me or did not fit the study’s requirements, they almost always knew someone else. Much to my pleasure, my acquaintance was able to garner a commitment from her friend to speak with me when she was in town.

Mine and Isabel’s conversation took place in the back room of our now mutual friend’s home while a quiet gathering of spouses and significant others took place in the rest of the house. Isabel did not feel comfortable being recorded, so I took furious notes. Most of the quotes are paraphrases of what she said. I am confident that they are very close to verbatim.

Although I had never met Isabel before this, I was instantly struck by the harried, tired look that masked an otherwise very pretty face. She told me that she had thought a lot about what she would say to me and was anxious to get started. Noteworthy is the fact that Isabel’s life situation most closely resembles my own. She, too, is a doctoral candidate trying to complete her dissertation while maintaining full responsibility for her infant son at home. This 29 year-old White woman spoke
candidly about the trials and tribulations of being an at-home mother; with most of them, I could relate. She states that although she is ultimately happy with her life, she misses the achieving part of herself. Most of her conflict surrounds this struggle. Other conflict comes from tension with her husband regarding how they plan to share future childrearing responsibilities. With much frustration, Isabel also finds herself looking to an outsider like she is living the life of the stereotypical woman; this is a life that she has worked very hard to avoid.

**Nan**

Nan is a 38 year-old White/Indian physician who recently gave birth to her second child. Her husband is also a physician. After being diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease in the past two years, he has reduced his practice to part-time.

Our interview took place in the formal dining room of Nan’s immense and beautiful home. Nan humorously referred to this room as “the butt palace” as it had been transformed into a full-service diapering station. Thus, amidst the Wedgwood and the Tiffany were diapers, wipes, various lotions and potions, and toys.
Nan recalls always wanting to be a physician. She feels that although she has faced many obstacles on the way, she has never doubted her goal. Nan’s troubles with combining family and medicine came when she was pregnant with her first baby. Not knowing that she was indeed pregnant, Nan’s residency director alluded to her need to use birth control if she desired a chief resident position. Nan suffered from depression as a result of such non-support as well as trying to combine the needs of an ill newborn with the demands of residency. Today, Nan is a full-time physician for an understaffed practice. Again, she finds herself in an environment that does not support her family responsibilities, which include two children and a husband with Parkinson’s Disease. Nan admits that she no longer wants to practice medicine, but must do so in order to support her family’s current lifestyle. She also feels pressure to save money for the future in the event that her husband’s illness interferes with his ability to work. Nan feels “no control” with her seemingly unhealthy situation. The result is a very fatigued, overwhelmed, bitter, but still strong woman.
Constructions of Self

How does a woman construct the roles that comprise and live out parts of her identity? More simply put: How do these women become achievers and mothers? This section discusses the themes, as described by the women in this study, of the process of growth and decision-making that brought them to create the life structure and identity they have today. Included in this section is the developmental process of “emergence” (Young, 1996). I will pay special attention to the roles that personality, gender ideology, role models, and other external factors play in role construction.

Emergence

_Emergence_ is one term that can be used to understand role construction. It refers to the particular phenomenon in which aspects of personality “come forth and become evident” (Young, 1996, p. 77). As one develops, the most basic aspects of her personality “are made observable as they infuse energy into, and create an attraction to, involvements, interests, and activities (Involvements)” (Young, 1996, p. 77). Involvements are external life investments in things, people, activities, and organizations. In essence, _Involvements_ are the observable
ways that one’s internal Self is lived out. Although the
women in this study have many roles and Involvements, I
will focus this discussion on motherhood and career. How
and why these women came to be mothers and achievers are
developed here.

These women describe their process of emergence as a
conscious and deliberate balance between family and career
goals. It is a complex development of negotiating
different, and sometimes-incompatible parts of the Self
with outside pressures and expectations. This complexity
is evident in Katherine’s description of her own
development and her advice to other young women:

Consider what role you want in your children’s lives
and how important a career is to you. Think about
your children and how you want them raised and think
about yourself and what you want to accomplish with
your life. Make a list of pros and cons as to what
you want your children to be and what you want
yourself to be and see where they mesh and where they
don’t. My goals for my children are that they always
feel loved and that they get the best care I can give
them. The goals for myself would be personally to put
my children first. And, as far as a career is
concerned, it can wait. If it’s going to be tough
down the road to get back into a profession, I’ll
worry about it then. That’s how I’ve made my
decisions.
With such complexity in mind, the next sections focus in more detail on how these women reflect upon the early emergence of their roles and their decision-making processes.

**Always Knew**

When asked to recall the origins of their roles as mother and professional, some of the women believed that their goals and desires in these areas have always been present. Many felt that this knowledge affected their later choices either directly or indirectly. Lynn, for example, recalls an early attraction to science and the field of medicine: *I've always wanted to be a doctor since I was in the 5th grade. I remember going to a career day in middle school and thinking that it was all so fascinating.*

Nan recalls an even earlier attraction to medicine:

> I always knew I wanted to be a doctor. Like, since I was five. As soon as I was cognizant I knew that I was going to be a physician. I never questioned that. I did a lot of other things, but I always knew that ultimately that was what I was going to end up doing. And come hell or high water I was going to do it. I had a lot of obstacles thrown in my way and basically I just put my head down and pushed through them all.

Angela dates her attraction to psychology back to her pre-college years. While in college, she did not engage in an exploration of other majors and careers:
I have always been interested in psychology. In college, I was a little undecided about the specifics of what exactly what I wanted in the field. But I went directly on to graduate school from there.

For Katherine, having a family has always been number one. She states that she has known since high school that she wanted to have children and be an at-home mother. These desires continued into college and guided her career decisions, which included a change in career goals from medicine to nutrition.

Involvements fit my personality

Aspects of one’s personality are sometimes made observable as they “infuse energy into, and create an attraction to, involvements, interests, and activities” (Young, 1996, p. 77). Some of these women spoke of an attraction to roles that were congruent with their personalities. These women stated that they made their early decisions about their roles based, at least in part, upon their interests, skills, and values.

For example, Maria was forced at the age of 17 to decide whether or not to move with her parents to the United States or stay in Venezuela and pursue medical school:
Even as a child I always tended to be a leader. Because of the type of person I am I was determined to go to medical school and my father wanted to bring me here to do something different. I was like, no, I want to do medicine.

Faced with pressure from her father to "do something different" to avoid separation from her parents, Maria decided to pursue what fit her personality. Later we will see how giving up her role as physician, which evolves from her core Self, creates an imbalance and incompleteness.

In the Indian educational system, you choose one of two school tracks: the math/science track or the liberal arts track. Madhu pursued the math/science track and soon discovered her abilities. She said:

Obviously before you can make the decision to become a physician you have to have the subjects to take in school. So I took the biological sciences in my school years and did well in that. I felt that I had the aptitude to get into medical school.

Gladys did not recall wanting to pursue counseling as a young girl. Instead, she describes a period of exploration as a young adult and the discovery of her interests in the field of counseling. She describes:

During my experiences as a teacher I found myself fascinated with all of this counseling theory and research. And if I was going to go back home and actually create a whole new role there I need research so I decided to pursue the Ph.D.
Isabel wandered a bit in college, and then happened upon sociology. She further explored the field through coursework and found that it fit her interests and abilities:

I think that my interest peaked in my intro to sociology course that I took because I heard it was easy. My professor happened to be really dynamic and she really turned me on to the subject. I started taking more and more courses in sociology and found that I was fascinated with it all.

Lynn notes that the social part of her personality also influenced her to pursue a career outside the home. She states: I knew that if I stayed home I'd probably be lonely. And I would rely on my husband more for any social outlet. I didn’t want to feel closed off from the world. On the contrary, Katherine describes how being a “homebody” fits her choice of at-home work:

On a human nature level, I am a homebody. My husband is a very social person and it would drive him crazy to be home all day. I am perfectly content to be where I am. I’m content watching the kids, watching T.V. occasionally, and taking care of the house. So, it just fits.

Finally, Nzingha chooses her career based upon her values and her strong convictions about education. In fact, Nzingha describes her Involvement as a Ph.D. student as part of an internal life mission. She states:

This isn’t just a career choice. What I’m doing here is larger than getting this Ph.D. This is a mission.
This is what God has put me on this earth to do. It’s not just getting a Ph.D., but the whole trajectory of what is going to come after that is a spiritual mission. This is what I’m supposed to be doing.

External Influences

In an ideal scenario, an individual would choose roles, or Involvements, that are congruent with her personality. In such a complex world as ours, however, this is not always the case. It can be difficult for even the most insightful person to discern which activities evolve from the Self and which are a response to the external world or socialization. I do not mean to say that all external forces are negative, or that it is wrong to try to adapt to one’s environment, but making choices based upon external factors may mean that those choices are incongruent with one’s organizing principles. Some of the women in this study were able to recognize which of their choices were based upon external influences.

Love and affection. Firstly, some of the participants describe decisions regarding Involvements that were based upon needs for love and affection. Looking back on her choices, Nzingha’s reflects upon her reason for marriage.

I was scared of finishing this process and being alone a single Black woman with a Ph.D. whose chances of getting married drop—they plummet. Most of the Black women I know are single, unless they got married before they started. And that was, to be totally
honest, that was the biggest thing in my head. I don’t want to finish this and not have anyone to share it with. It was fear.

Similarly, Nzingha’s decision to become a mother was not based upon a fit with her interests, skills, or values. She describes stopping birth control pills not because she wanted to, but because it was her husband’s wishes. She recalls:

That whole decision, oh God. I was thinking I would stay on the pill for at least the first year of our marriage before we starting talking about having kids. I just made the assumption that he would feel the same way. You know, have a chance for at least year to adjust to just us and really bond and gel as a couple. He didn’t feel that way at all. He broached the topic one day about wanting me to come off the pill as soon as we were married. I was just like, I don’t know if that’s such a good idea. We got into an argument over it. I was like, alright fine. I rationalized it in my head by saying that no one gets pregnant right off the pill. It’s going to take at least six months for my system to get back on track. Six months wasn’t as long as I wanted but...there is no way that this could happen on our honeymoon. But it did.

Hence, Nzhiga’s resulting pregnancy was unwelcome:

When I found out I was pregnant, I broke down in tears. I kept putting off finding out hoping, just hoping that I would start bleeding. Please God, don’t let this be! When I found out I think I instantly started crying. I knew that there was no way in hell that he would have let me abort that child. So I would have had to do it covertly. I couldn’t have gone through that by myself. And there’s no way he would have seen any kind of logic or rationale to having an abortion at that time. I can’t say now that I wish she hadn’t been born, but at the time I didn’t want her.
Teresa sees her early career decisions, including her decision to stay in her home town for college and choosing a finance major, as based not upon a process of exploration, but in her deep-seated needs for love and affection.

There just wasn't a whole lot of affection in our family. Some of the choices I've made may have been because of that. I stayed here for college because I was scared to leave my fiancé. And then I rushed through school to get a job and get married. I mean, that was one of my big goals then, is to get married. I just latched on to any affection I could get. If I'd gone away to school, I often wonder how things would be. Maybe I would have explored more and gone into a different major instead of my goal being to get out of the house. I think my self-esteem would be better and I would have picked a career that I was actually passionate about. Who knows where I'd be?

Teresa recognized that she did not choose her career based upon an exploration of her interests, skills, or values. She also states that it was therefore easy to give it up once she had children.

Isabel initially decided to attend college to please her parents; she chose her college based upon where her high school peers had enrolled. She states that she had little motivation to attend college otherwise.

College was kind of expected of me. My parents didn't go to college and they...especially my dad...really pushed us to excel in school. So when the time came to choose a college I knew I would go, but had a hard time choosing which one. My parents really didn't have much experience in that area...so we kind of
bungled along and relied on my high school counselor a lot. This is really embarrassing to say, but I think I ultimately picked my college based upon some friends who planned to go to college in the same city. They chose based on their interests and I chose based upon them. But what can you expect from a seventeen year old?

**Role models**

Several women point to role models, in both positive and negative lights, as having a significant affect on their development as both professionals and mothers. Madhu was initially drawn to the field of medicine because she comes from a family of physicians:

As a child I was very much interested in the medical sciences. Just because many people in my family were doctors including my father, my uncles and my aunts. And so they were kind of my role models. I was interested in and very motivated by my own father who is a very renowned pediatrician in India. He was my role model and I wanted to be a pediatrician as well. So I did that. I went to the same medical school as he did.

Unlike Lynn and Katherine who had early concerns about combining a career in medicine with motherhood, Madhu recalls little apprehension about maintaining her future dual roles successfully. Therefore, she pursued her career goals with great confidence. She attributes this self-assurance to her role models’ success at managing their home and professional lives:

Because when you see somebody else doing it [family and career] I think you find it a little easier. If
my father could do it, and my mother could do it, and all of my aunts and uncles were raising their children being professionals you think that you can do it too. It's something like having a role model. I think that my parents did a wonderful job; I respect them for that. My husband's parents are both doctors too. They are busy and have their own professional lives too. I was lucky to get good people around me to see that they could do it.

Angela’s father was a neuropathologist and her mother a psychiatrist. They, too, acted as role models for her. She states: My parents were both very involved in their careers. And I think that it was interesting for me to see how they juggled that. What she saw as a child, both positive and negative, affected her own choices and development as both a professional and a mother. She describes her mother’s influence as follows:

My mom was traveling a lot for her career. And although I was really proud of her and her career, I always wished she was home with us more. So I think that affected how I thought about my own life and career. I saw myself as working but I always thought I want to be more involved in my kids’ lives.

And her father’s influence:

It was really my father that was juggling everything. He is a very special person. I had a great relationship with my father. Not even intentionally, but I think that I get a lot of my values from him.

Lynn’s mother was a “housewife” and did not work outside the home. Lynn recalls her mom as “lost” when she and her siblings moved out of the house to pursue their own
independence. She states that she has purposely avoided this same sadness in her own life by pursuing a career outside the home:

I didn’t want to turn into my mom because my mom is a very, very sad person. She wasn’t unhappy until we all left. My mom was confident when she had all of us around her, and now we’re all gone. So, she has no idea who she is or what to do with her life now. I think as I started to mature I started to notice more things and she became sadder.

Teresa also has concerns about ending up like her mother and therefore chooses her roles very carefully and thoughtfully. She says:

I have seen women live what I don’t want to live. Sometimes I feel like I was raised in that situation where my mom thought she was stuck with us. She didn’t have as many choices as I have. She was expected to stay home with her kids. And I think she might resent that or regret that. Sometimes you just feel like you’re being blamed for that as a child. You feel like your mom has to stay home. I don’t ever want my kids to think that. I want them to think that was my choice and that’s what I want to do.

It is because of her mother’s unhappiness, according to Isabel, that she also expresses a general state of confusion in the motivation behind many of her choices.

First, I think, was my mom a good mom? My immediate answer would be that no, she was not. She couldn’t be because she had so many issues with herself. But then I see that we have all turned out fine, a little bruised maybe, but fine. (Bruised?) Yeah. Look at what I’ve told you so far. I’m scared to death that if I stay home that I will end up like my mom or like other women like her. You know, the stereotypical woman. So then I think, no it’s not the same. I’m
choosing to stay home. She really didn’t have a choice. But am I really? Is staying home out of guilt really choosing? Or am I doing it for the same reasons she did? And then I think about going back to work and I wonder if it’s what I really want or if it’s just a response to my fears? You see what I mean? I’m all confused. You must think I’m crazy.

Many women also express a realization that how they choose to organize their own roles and lives may have an affect on their own children’s future choices. Thus they make some of their decisions, and rationalize or doubt many others, based upon what kind of values they would like to reflect on their own children. Here are some examples:

Because I have a career, I have a good sense of who I am and I don’t feel lost. You know, it’s a good role model for her. I don’t know, I’m just confident in who I am. I think that it’s good that I’m teaching her confidence and for her to see that in her own family. It takes confidence to do what I do. I guess the overriding value I want to model for her is that you just have to do whatever it is you have to do to make yourself happy. And yeah, I’d like for her to have a career. I feel she’d be missing out on something if she didn’t. The only thing I don’t want for her is for her to stay home, raise her kids, and then be lost. (Lynn)

I want her to always pursue what she wants to do. I want her to feel comfortable and happy with her life, and in who she is. And if there’s something that she doesn’t like in her, that she can change it. It just takes a little time and patience and really wanting to do it. Everything in life, I tell her, if you want to do it you can if you really try. (Maria)

I want her to learn to love herself first, before anybody else. Because if you don’t love yourself no one else is going to love you. And if you don’t put yourself first no one else will either. I want to
teach her to be true to herself, to honor herself and what she wants and needs. And not to be ashamed of saying “I need this”. (Nzingha)

For my daughter, I would hope that when the time comes and she’s making her own decisions I would let her do that. If she would choose to go to work and have someone watch her kids, I hope that I would accept that as being perfectly fine. Whatever she would like to do. If she wants to stay home that’s fine. If she wants to be a doctor and spend all of her time away from home we’d have to talk, but I hope that I would be able to say that if that’s what you want to do that’s fine. (Katherine)

I want my girls to have self-esteem and to know they can do whatever they want to do in life. I want him to be independent and I think that then he will be successful and happy. I don’t want my girls to fall into those gender roles. I will keep pounding that into their heads that they can do anything. (Teresa)

Career-Family Conflict and Gender-Role Ideology

Learned assumptions about conflicts between career and work as well as gender-role ideology had a significant impact on the emergence of roles in several participants. These external influences are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Summary

The women of this study engage in a complex process of Emergence. Some of their roles are chosen based on their personalities; others are influenced by external influences such as the need for love and affection, perceived conflict between nurturing and achieving Selves, gender role
expectations, and role models. What all of the women in this study have in common is that both the roles of nurturer/mother and achiever/professional emerged at some point in their development. Next, how each role is lived out will be addressed.

Nature of Roles

Introduction

While the constructions of Self involve the process of acquiring roles, the nature of roles describes how these roles are presently lived out. The nature and construction of roles are intertwined and are separated here for discussion purposes only. It seems as if the women in this study are involved in continual process of role construction and reconstruction as their selves and outer worlds change. Included in this section are descriptions of roles, role maintenance (why are you doing it that way?), and self-assessment.

Full-Time At-Home Motherhood: What It’s Like

I hesitate to title this section full-time motherhood, as it presumes that the women who work outside the home are anything less than full-time mothers. This does not seem to be the case, as will be shown in the next sections. Nonetheless, some participants describe what it is like,
day to day, as a full-time at-home mother. The most obvious theme is the many roles and responsibilities within the job of mother.

First, Maria describes her days at home:

I do everything. My husband doesn’t know anything about money. I’m the one that pays the bills, buys the groceries, pays the insurance for the car, takes our daughter to the doctor. It’s really time consuming. I try to organize myself in that matter. Certain days are dedicated to cleaning the house or doing the laundry. But most of all, I try to do a lot of activities with my daughter. I believe the first three years are the most important in terms of how they develop.

And Teresa:

I cook, and I clean, and I chauffeur, and I’m, I guess I’m everything. I’m a nurse, I’m a doctor, and I’m a chauffeur. But really, I’m a teacher. I wear several, several hats and they are all important. But being a teacher is the hardest and most important of all.

And Katherine:

We get up every morning at no particularly set time, which is nice. And then most of the day is spent playing games, reading stories, putting together puzzles. I try to do the housework when the kids nap. If it gets done, great. If not, it just doesn’t. I think it’s much more important to put a puzzle together with my son than scrub my kitchen floor. If I need to run errands I usually wait until my husband gets home so he can watch the kids.

And finally, Isabel:

I think I do most of the day-to-day stuff like dishes, cooking, washing and filling bottles, laundry. I guess you would say that I’m the house manager. I know when we need more milk or stamps. I know when Jay is getting low on underwear (laughs) and I know
when Charlie has had his last poop. Sometimes I envision what Jay would do if I had to leave town unexpectedly. I'm sure he would manage eventually, but it would sure be funny to watch! My most important job, however, is playing and interacting with the baby.

Why I do it

The at-home women all have advanced training and education, which took years to attain. After the birth of their child, however, these women decided to postpone or even forego their careers to become full-time at home mothers. An obvious question that comes to mind, is "why"? As one of these women, it is a question I often hear. Usually, it comes in the form of pity and sounds something like this: "What's a woman with so much education doing at home?" It is not such a simple question; it has no simple answers. And just being asked this question stirs up all kinds of emotions, doubts, and even defensiveness in the women who are asked. My question of "why" for the women of this study seeks to uncover the most current reasoning behind their decision to stay home despite their professional achievements.

1) Emergence. As suggested in the previous section the roles that the women of this study live out today are a cumulative expression of a lifetime of experiences with the Self and the outside world. For example, because of an
absence of love and affection in her family of origin, Teresa chose a career path without much exploration. The result was a career about which she was not passionate; therefore, it was one that was easy for her to give up in lieu of full-time motherhood. Also, the conviction held by all three women that we are naturally suited as childcare providers, whether this notion is correct or not, is a continued justification for why they are at home.

For the at-home women, it also seems that when the achievement and nurturing aspects of the self were developing, the role of mother was most important. This may have been because it was more congruent with her personality, because of external influences, or a combination of the two forces. Regardless, the nurturing aspect of the Self took precedence in choosing involvements or roles.

2) **Love of motherhood.** All of the at-home mothers describe a deep love and affection for their children. These strong, positive feelings are noted as one of the most significant reasons that they maintain their at-home status. Here are some examples:

> I adore my son; my husband says I am "smitten". He’s so amazing. Every day he discovers something new. And he’s so attached to me. It’s an amazing feeling. You think you love your spouse, but then the whole
meaning of that word changes when you have a child. (Isabel)

...just seeing their smiles. (Very long pause.)
(Looks over at daughter who is jumping rope nearby, giggling.) I can’t stare at that face and...(Very long pause.) It’s so hard to put into words. They’re just this little part of you that you’ve molded and to see them accomplishing things. It’s just so rewarding. Just seeing her learn how to jump rope, or spell her name and know that you had a part in that. It’s so rewarding. Seeing them happy and well-adjusted, playing with friends, and making it through the day and being able to end the day with a smile on their faces. It is so rewarding. (Teresa)

I was home when my son learned how to walk. I’ve seen all of the first things with the kids which is wonderful and very rewarding. The most rewarding parts are just watching my kids develop. It is so neat to watch them make a new discovery and put things together. To see them smile...(Katherine)

3) Daycare. A common reason the at-home mothers give for why they stay home with their child(ren) is their negative feelings about and experiences with daycare. Teresa’s misgivings about daycare stem from her first child’s daycare provider. She explains:

I was very uncomfortable with the babysitter. We just had some things that happened that made me uneasy with her. And then I just became uneasy with the whole babysitting thing. Our sitter would leave Peter in the house and then her and her daughter would go outside and play in the snow. Or she would put Peter in a swing and then she’d mow her lawn. One time she wanted to go swimming with a friend, so she put Peter and her daughter with another babysitter without telling me. I was uncomfortable with it.
Teresa states that because of these issues she quit her job to take care of her baby. She has not returned to work since. Teresa does live very close to her parents, but does not feel comfortable about using them for childcare. 

*I’ve always felt, too, that I was imposing on my mom. I knew my mom had raised her five kids and here she is with mine. I always felt that little twinge of guilt I guess.*

Maria has never used childcare for her daughter, but has strong negative feelings about its effect on children. In fact, she blames daycare for one child’s behavior problems:

*I have a friend from our country that works full time and has her son in daycare. He was just a terrible kid! She would come over here and she would be embarrassed because the kid is so disobedient. I told her, that kid needs more attention! He wants that more than anything else. He’s just getting all of that love that he really needs from you from some caregiver.*

And Katherine, who does use sitters on occasion, says:

*I just can’t imagine getting my kids up every morning by 6:30 and dragging them out of the house to daycare. How awful.*

Before her son was born, Isabel planned to utilize daycare and return to work. She states that she is
surprised to find herself nervous about daycare and unable
to bring herself to use it even though her son is now eight
months old:

You know, I always thought that I would stay home for
six weeks and then put him in daycare. But that was
before I ever met my son. I just fell in love. And I
just can’t stand the idea of him in a room full of
kids, all of those germs, and minimal one-to-one
contact.

4) Self and/or child. The most profound reason the
women give for staying home, regardless of their extensive
training and career potential, is that they believe it is
the best thing for their child. They are willing to
postpone their careers, even if it means a difficult
reentry, because they feel it is the right thing to do.
Furthermore, I found that these women just as strongly
enjoy the rewards they receive from their roles as full­
time mothers. I combine these two reasons for staying
home, for the child and for the self, together because I
found they were intertwined. I was not surprised to find
that these women stayed home for the sake of their
children. When I read the responses more closely, however,
I was surprised to find that staying home for the Self was
equally valued. These reasons overlapped and were
difficult to separate out in analysis. Perhaps it was also
difficult for the women to separate that out for themselves
during our brief conversations.

For example, I asked Maria why she stays home full-
time in light of the fact that she misses her medical
career so much. Note how her reasoning alternates between
doing what is best for the child and what she finds
rewarding for her self:

If you work outside the home you’re not going to have
as much time to spend with your kids or to do any of
the activities like what I do with my daughter. (self
and child) My husband doesn’t have that opportunity.
(self) My husband doesn’t get to see how she advances
from one thing to another. (self) And also the child
wouldn’t have the opportunity to develop those skills.
(child) My daughter gives me so much. (self) Every
single thing they do is so rewarding. (self and
child) You get to see how they start developing
different types of skills and knowledge and all that.
(self) I think the child deserves as much time as you
can give them. (child) That child makes you so proud.
(self)

Katherine’s response to the same question is also mixed:

I certainly don’t fault anyone for going back to work.
But, at the same time I think that you miss out on so
much with your kids. (self) And they miss out on a lot
as well. (child) They get so much more contact and
learn so much more being home with me because they get
so much more attention. (child)
And finally, although it is apparent in our conversation that Teresa wants what is best for her children, her response to my inquiries is focused on the benefits she receives as an at-home mother.

I like to be involved in my kids' lives. I don’t like having somebody else pick them up, drop them off. That’s hard to do even if you’re working part time. It’s hard to be there for all of their little extracurricular things. I get to be the one to teach them what our values are...what Adam and I see as very important values. I get to see all their first things...their first steps. I get to be involved in all their extracurriculars.

Summary

The day-to-day lives of the at-home women are very full. Although they engage in a multitude of tasks that include housekeeping, financial management, and nutrition, the primary focus of each day is clearly the facilitation of activities that encourage the development of their children. The reasons given for maintaining their roles as at-home mother were very similar. For example, all of the women had distrust in daycare. What was most striking, however, were the two overlapping reasons for staying home: for the child and for the self.

Of special note is that on the surface, it may appear that the at-home mothers are not living out dual roles. It would be a grave mistake, however, to use external
activities as the only measure here. In fact, all of the women in this study consider themselves to be living dual roles. Even though the at-home women are not actively pursuing their careers at the moment, the achieving aspects of their personality continue to be a big part of their identities. The women who do not work outside the home see this as a temporary state only. They keep in touch with their achieving selves, whether it be in their minds only, or by participating in their careers in some way. This phenomenon will be further explored in later sections.

The Nature of Dual Roles

Each of the women who works outside the home uniquely arranges her daily life to accommodate her career and family roles. One obvious pattern, however, is the intricate and almost rigidly complicated schedules that the women employ in their lives. For example, this is how Lynn describes her day:

She gets up at 5:30 with us. I play with her for a few minutes and then breastfeed her. Then my husband plays with her while I get showered and ready for work. Then I drop her off at the sitter’s house and get to the hospital by around seven o’clock. In the meantime, my husband gets ready for work. We have her take lots of naps at the sitters so that from five o’clock in the evening to eleven o’clock she’s up. That way, a lot of her waking hours are with us and we can spend time together as a family.
Gladys’ routine is equally structured and complex:

The kids stay home with me all morning. I’ll wake them up, I do the housework, bathe them, feed them and then get them ready to go to childcare. And I get ready for work. And then my husband comes in the afternoon and stays with the baby sometimes. And if not, he’ll work on his dissertation and they both go to childcare while I’m at work. Then we pick them up at around 5 or 5:30. We have dinner together, we play with them, we watch some T.V. and relax, and then they go to bed around 8:30 or 9. And then I’m ready to read, grade papers, or do whatever I have to do.

Nan describes her previous days as a resident and mother as “unpleasant” and “horrible”. Each day was very long and hectic:

Typically I got up at 4:30 in the morning and went to sleep exhausted past midnight. I really didn’t see my son much. I just saw him at night when he was colicky. I have very few fond memories of the first few years of his life. If it weren’t for photos, I wouldn’t remember that I took time to sew a Halloween costume for him or that I did fun things with him. All I remember is this haze of pain of going through that time. It was very very unpleasant. It was beyond horrible.

Today, as a physician and mother of two, her days continue to be intolerably busy:

Right now I can barely survive. Routinely, I do two loads of laundry between midnight and six. As far as sleep goes, I get four to five hours. And that’s on a good night. Sometimes if it is outrageously fortuitous, maybe six hours. This party takes a whole lot of maintenance. Nothing happens easily or by accident. And if we don’t do maintenance, things fall apart pretty damn quickly. Our schedules are so tight that everything is an emergency. My son has swim practice, and Jesus, the number of phone calls it takes just to get him to a practice. If we’re not
tight, there's trouble. Sometimes we're more in sync than others. When we're not, it's pretty painful. We're always reworking systems. What works better, what doesn't.

Why I do it

As is apparent in the previous section, the lives of these women are very busy. Why do they maintain such hectic lives? I'm sure this question arises often for these women, especially for those whose spouses have jobs that could financially support the family. The rationale for combining roles that were expressed to me during our interviews were varied. But again, some themes and patterns did emerge.

1) Emergence. Like the at-home women, both parts of the Self, the achiever and the nurturer, emerged throughout childhood and young adulthood. For these women, however, the achieving aspects of the self may have been equally as or more important than the nurturing.

2) Love of motherhood. The women who work outside the home express no less love for and commitment to their children than do their at-home counterparts. At times it seemed that these women wanted to make sure I understood that fact; just because they have careers outside the home does not mean that they love their children any less. They say:
Having a baby is so much fun! You have this happy little person that wakes up in the morning and the first thing she does is smile. What could be better than that? (Lynn)

Being a mother is the most wonderful thing that I’ve ever done in my life. This country has given me the opportunity to lead a life as a couple, it gave me all of these degrees, but the most important one is the title of mommy. Watching my kids grow is just wonderful. Every single moment that you share with them, whatever you are doing—reading a story, just talking, just playing—whatever it is. It’s just wonderful. (Gladys)

I love being a mom now. Being a mom the second time around has been markedly different because I have a little more control. I took eight weeks maternity with this baby. I discovered a whole phase of infancy that you’re supposed to love and I actually did. (Nan)

I am enjoying my baby. Just everything about him. He is my second one and I had forgotten what things were like with my first baby after six years. For me the whole experience is wonderful. I’m just enjoying the days when he is talking to me. He is babbling and cooing. At six weeks he was having a social smile and cooing. To me, those moments are so precious. (Madhu)

3) Love of job. Perhaps what sets these women apart from the at-home mothers is their expressed passion for their careers. One of the main reasons they work outside the home is that they love their jobs.

I love my work. I just love it. And I think that’s what has been so great. You couldn’t have invented a more perfect job for me. I have been so lucky that way all along. It’s perfect. I love the people I work with. I really enjoy the contact I have from parents. I really am so grateful for the opportunity to get to know people with such different lives than
mine and really get to understand how they see the world. The people I work with are really wonderful (Angela)

Obviously, I still value what I do. I have leadership roles which I have created. Now the things I enjoy the most are not patient care although I certainly value that because I’m a perfectionist when it comes to work. But I mentor a lot of the gals at work. The mentorship role has become more important to me than anything. I protect my employees, I fight for them, I try to give them a safe place to work. (Nan)

If I didn’t work I don’t think I would be a happy person. Being a doctor, even if you see ten cases of the same disease, you always learn more. Each patient teaches you about the same disease over and over again. It’s always a little different. You learn every time; it’s a whole new experience. It is so beautiful. It’s a beautiful feeling to feel that you can do something to change so much in somebody’s life. You can help them. It’s an amazing feeling. I have felt it. I have felt it personally in the people that I work with. With what you can do to change a life, it is awesome. (Madhu)

I like all of it [medicine]. I have fun when I go to work. I like what I do for a living. I’m always anxious to read more about something. (Lynn)

When I see a kid making a responsible decision. That’s rewarding. Because then I know that I’m teaching him or her skills about making decisions. Not only in terms of majors and careers but decisions in life. That’s rewarding. Even if I won the lottery, I would still do things as I do: part-time. I wouldn’t do full time. But I would still work, yes. (Gladys)

The one exception to this general pattern is Maria. She is an at-home mother who impatiently hopes to restart her career. She, too, expresses a passion for medicine:
Being a doctor has never been about the money. I really love medicine. I really do. It’s been almost three years now and I love going back through my medical books and reading.

4) Wholeness/Balance. For many of the women I spoke with, focusing all of their energy on the role of mother, even temporarily, would not be satisfying or fulfilling. Simultaneously living out their achieving and nurturing roles provides a sense of balance and wholeness. Gladys, for example, is not willing to give up the achieving aspect of her self for the sake of balance. She states:

Combining roles is very rewarding in all of the roles you want to play in life at the same time! I’m not giving up one role for the other one! I guess that’s what makes me happy, that I know that I’m not compromising one role for the other one. I manage to be a wife, I manage to be a mom, I manage to be a good student, and I manage to be a good employee. I think that it’s important that you express yourself in all of those roles and as far as I...I guess if I wasn’t all of those roles I wouldn’t be myself. I have no regrets.

Gladys also feels that combining both roles creates a sense of wholeness that does not only make her happy, but makes her better at each individual role:

I don’t think you can separate one role from the other one. It’s the same person. I’m the mom and I’m the worker. I am who I am in both so you cannot split those. I think that I learn from being a mom also. I am more patient with a student that is driving me nuts at one point. You know, and things like that. So I don’t think you split those. I think they are all me, still. I think that part of my job makes me a better
mom, actually. And my mother role makes me be a better worker. So, I keep on saying that to myself.

Angela enjoys the unique, but complementary aspects of both her roles:

There are also many positives to having a career outside of the home. I don’t know how to be specific about it. It just sort of feels like I have the best of both worlds. It’s nice to have the professional achievement and accomplishment and contact with people. I enjoy those challenges.

Similarly, Nan and Madhu value both parts of their lives:

I think that if I quit I would miss work a lot. I mean, I’m almost 40 years old. I’ve put most of my cognizant being into getting as good as I am at what I do now. If that were pulled from under me that would be a huge vacuum. And also I’ve put a lot into being a mom. I work very hard at being a mom. And if anything happened to my children, and I was no longer a mother to living children I would be absolutely devastated. So I value both aspects tremendously. (Nan)

I think that working makes you think better as a whole. It can be any field. When you work you are more focused. You have a plan for the whole of the day. Honestly, if I am not working and I wake up and the only thing I know is that I’m going to push my son off to school...And after that? I don’t know, my house may be a mess. My cooking may or may not get done. I used to be depressed not doing anything. (Madhu)

5) Financial. Some of the women who work outside the home do so for a very pragmatic reason: the money. Nan needs to keep working in order to support the lifestyle that she and her family enjoy. This includes paying for the palace:
I don't want to do this anymore. I’m paying for the palace. It’s sad to say because I got into this field to do good for people and to save lives. And now I’m just paying a mortgage. But I’ve got this thing where I really want to retire. (laughs) If I can live fifteen more years (laughs) and bank enough I am out the door. (Nan)

Lynn works as a full-time resident to pay the bills and the loans that have accrued over the years. She sometimes fantasizes about having enough money to quit her job.

Self assessment.

Good mother. All of the women I spoke with, both at-home and employed, struggled with this question. This was apparent from their faces and body language, their pauses, their stops and starts, and their words. For some, defining a good mother was simply too hard to put into words:

(Laughs.) That’s kind of tough. (Long pause.) That’s kind of tough because you always think to yourself that you’re a good mother, and...I don’t know. I guess being a good mother is...(long pause)...is giving the most that you can to your child internally, not materially. It’s giving all the best that you have to your child. All of your love, your support, all of the good things that you have. It’s really tough. You never know if you’re the perfect mom. But you always try to be. (Maria)

And others, like Nzingha, struggle with the internal and external definitions of what a good mother is:

That’s a hard question because you’re in a position where you can’t define it the way the majority of society defines it. If you did, you’d fail. If you
define it the way the majority of society defines it you’re home the majority of the time with your child and you’re the primary caretaker and you bake cookies and you can sew and...that whole thing. I’d fail hands down, big old ‘F’. So I have intentionally had to redefine what it means for me to be a good mother.

Despite the struggles with this question, some patterns did emerge in the responses. They include: time, doing what’s best for child, and taking care of self.

1) Time. The most common theme I found in the definition of a good mother is the amount of time spent with the child(ren). For example, Katherine clearly states:

It’s so hard to say what’s a good mom being a mom...do I consider myself a good mom? I consider myself a good mom. So then, why? Because I can spend time with my kids. I think just being there is the most important thing in being a good mom.

Lynn has difficulty with this question because she defines a ‘good mom’ as one who spends a lot of time with her children; yet, she knows that her own time with her daughter is limited to evening and weekend hours. She states:

[Very long pause.] [Looks at me and to the floor several times.] I mean, my gut tells me to say if you spend enough time with them, but then that puts me out of the running. So, I can’t say that. [Laughs.]
And Nzingha feels that she cannot be a good mother because the time commitment of her Ph.D. work leaves few hours with her daughter. She states:

And as it stands right now, I cannot be the mother to her that I want her to have. You know how many hours you put into your dissertation. It would not be fair to her to put her in a situation. To not see me 12 to 14 hours a day and then coming home and...you never disconnect from this stuff. And she still doesn’t really have me. I don’t spend enough time with her and I can’t conceive of that as being fair.

2) Doing what’s best for your child. All of the women I spoke with also impressed upon me their desire to do what is best for their child(ren). For some women that means postponing their careers to stay home with their young children; for others it means working outside the home to achieve a more balanced self to give to their children. In other words, what seemed to be at the core of their decisions was the well-being and happiness of their children, either directly or indirectly. Clearly, this is the case when Teresa states:

A good mother is somebody that puts her children first. She wants to make them a priority. Things I do, I do for them. If they’re good decisions or bad decisions, if they turn out to be the wrong choice or the right choice, I’m doing it for their own good.

Nzingha feels that her decision to relinquish parental custody to her husband is also what is best for her daughter. She explains:
I'm trying to do what's best for her. I want her to come out of this as intact as possible. What I've come to is doing what's best in making sure she's happy. Doing what I need to do so that she knows that she is loved and that she is happy and provided for. That's what it means to be a good mother.

Teresa and Nzingha, whose life patterns and behaviors appear to be very different, have this common goal—doing what is best for their children.

3) Taking care of yourself. Three women, in three very different life situations all state that a good mother takes care of herself so that she can in turn give more to her children.

A lot of women feel guilty that if they have a career they are not a good mom. I think as far as having a career, and being satisfied with that career, that makes you a good mom too. If you are learning from those experiences from that job, that helps to make you a good mom. It helps you to develop your mom role. Who I am at work, how I am with those students, who I am when I'm teaching...all of that helps me to teach my kids. It helps me to relate better to my kids. Relationships with a new boss that I don't like or things like that teach me how to work with my kids when I don't like what they do. You know what I mean? Actually, it is because I do this that I can offer more to my kids. That makes me a good mom (Gladys)

A good mom...(long pause)...just knows that you can't be a super mother. You can't do everything. You can't be everything. A good mom knows that. A good mom knows when she's had enough for the time being. And she needs to try and get the kids to nap. Or she needs to take some time for herself. (Katherine)

I think a good mom is balanced. She takes care of her kids, but she also takes care of herself. That can mean different things for different moms. For some it
may be exercising and for others it may be a full-time job. It all depends on how you are wired and what you need. I don’t think you can give as much if you are not feeling good about yourself. (Isabel)

Summary

Women who are at-home moms and those who work outside the home have at least this in common: they lead very busy lives. The descriptions of day-to-day activities clearly illustrate that point. Reasons for maintaining either lifestyle are varied, but for both, having the child’s and the Self’s best interest in mind are at the forefront. In fact, these reasons are intertwined. Therefore, although the context of each woman’s decision may look very different (staying home full time, working part time, working full time) the process of coming to that decision is very similar. It revolves around how each woman answers this question: Given two roles, how can I best meet the needs of my Self and my child?

Choices regarding career and family may not come easily; nor do they come without negative consequences. Both the at-home mothers and working mothers face tension and conflict as a result of their decisions. The next section focuses on the challenges each woman faces as she tries to strike her own balance between her nurturing and achieving Selves.
Tension

Each of the women in this study spoke of tension, of varying degree and kind, which was unique to their roles as nurturer and achiever. Some of the sources of tension seemed quite predictable and logical; others came as a surprise. What follows is a discussion of the themes and patterns that emerge regarding the degree, sources, and nature of tension in these women’s lives. With the use of extensive quotes, I will try to understand these issues as the women describe them.

Degree of Tension

As stated earlier, some women realized at a young age that their family goals and career aspirations might be at odds. Others did not experience conflict until they had their first child and then tried to combine motherhood with their careers. Nonetheless, all of the women felt at least some degree of stress and tension at the time of the interview. I will first describe the current status of each of the women’s tension in general terms.

Gladys states that tension, for women in general, comes from their desire to achieve more than the motherhood role. She states: If they are moms, I think they also want to be fulfilled in a career. I guess the problem is how to
do both. *If you want a full time job and a family it can be very difficult.* Although Gladys expresses a great deal of satisfaction in combining her roles as wife, mother, and achiever, we will see that she feels some tension about time, money, and her reliance upon daycare.

Although Nzingha did not predict or assume that her goals for both a family and a career would be in conflict, she is now very aware of how they are at odds, not necessarily within her, but in making them work in the outside world. She very poignantly explains:

> There are such fragmented ideas about what it means to have a Ph.D. in this box, and what it means to be a wife in this box, and a mother in this box. There’s no cross-fertilization of the boxes going on here and it’s like wait a minute! This is a problem! There’s no expectation for men to be the primary nurturer; they don’t have the responsibility. They are supposed to be out there in the world achieving. But for women, you can be out there achieving, but once you have children you need to come back home where you belong.

More specifically, most of Nzingha’s tension surrounds trying to be a mother, wife, and scholar within her relationship with her husband, whom she describes as needy and non-supportive. She states that she cannot take adequate care of her baby and finish her Ph.D. in her current marital situation. The strain is so intolerable, in fact, that Nzingha plans to divorce her husband and relinquish custody of her child for the next several years.
even though it will “kill her”. Nzingha’s level of stress is the greatest among the women I talked with. Her degree of conflict is quite compelling in the following statement:

I am less and less complimented by people calling me a “superwoman”. To me, when I hear the term “superwoman” it says to me this is a woman who doesn’t need any help, can do it all on her own, doesn’t need any rest, doesn’t need any support, doesn’t need to just sit down and cry every once in a while. She’s invincible. She can do it all. It’s very, very burdensome. And so when people say “girl, you wear an ‘S’ on your chest” I say, “There ain’t no ‘S’ on my chest. The only way I’m able to do what I’m doing is by the grace of God”. This is not some feat of superhuman strength at all. And quite frankly there are some points where I need to just be able to fall the fuck apart and not do this anymore. But I can’t. If I fall apart, the whole household falls apart.

Maria is at a crossroads in her life and in her career development. She faces just what Gladys describes and, thus, experiences moderate conflict in her life. She, too, loves her role as mother but wants to re-establish her achieving self; she wants to be a physician. She states that:

Right now I want to have another baby, but I also want to be a doctor. But what moment in your life are you going to do it? You never know when it is the right time. I could have said after I graduate but after you graduate you want to go into residency. You don’t want to do it when you are in your residency. And then you are starting your new job so that isn’t the right moment either. After you start your job you are probably in your mid-thirties. If I didn’t have her the day I had her...I don’t know what would have happened. But now I have her and I don’t know how to start my career up again. I want to do a residency
but I know at this point I can’t do it. Why? I see what my husband spends at the hospital. He leaves here at 6:30 in the morning and he won’t be home until 8:00 or 9:00 at night. If I go into a residency who is going to stay with our daughter? It wouldn’t be a possibility. But, that’s really what I want to do—go into a residency.

Teresa’s moderate level of conflict takes the form of self-doubt as she continually questions her decisions to stay home full time with her children. She also states that she feels like she needs to justify her decision to everyone, including herself. Here, she doubts her abilities as a mother:

Sometimes I think I’d be better off at work. Some days I think I’m not the best care provider either. I might appreciate more what they do on a day to day basis. Like when Adam comes home he’s amazed at some of the things they do. He sees things differently than I do because I take them for granted. So, in that way that might be better.

Teresa also sees the best situation for a woman and her family as one that involves a balance between nurturing and achievement roles. This is a balance that she feels she does not have in her own life.

I think it’s good to have a parent home with the kids primarily. But, I think there needs to be a balance in everything you do. So, that stability is good and I just think you’re fresher at work and you’re fresher at home if you have the balance of both. I think it’s ideal to combine work with family. I really admire somebody that can juggle being at home and working and feel comfortable with it. Anyone that can juggle both
successfully...have covered all of their bases...feel comfortable with it...I give them a lot of credit. Sometimes I wish I could do that.

Lynn is very happy with her home life and her career. She does express concern about not spending time with her baby, and falling behind in both her household and career duties. What is most striking about Lynn’s conflict is the resentment she feels about her educational debts and not having any choice but to continue full-time work to pay them off. She states:

If I didn’t go to medical school I wouldn’t have these loans. If I didn’t have these loans, I could stay home with my daughter if I wanted to. If I just went to college and was a social worker or a nurse I wouldn’t have all of these loans and I could stay home if I wanted. Sometimes I get mad about it because I have no choice. I’m like, I went for more education and now sometimes I think I’m being punished. It’s almost like a set-up. Now I have all of these loans so I have no choice but to work right now.

Nan expresses a very high degree of tension in her life and attributes it to:

Having absolutely no control of anything. I had no control over my job. I had no control over this incredibly demanding child. I had no control over a husband that was sick. I had no control over anything. And ultimately it all fell upon my shoulders to take care of it all anyway. So I was asked to assume burdens I had no control over at that point, and that was incredibly difficult. I find myself in the same poor environment now as an attending physician. I’m in a completely inflexible situation that is making my life hell again. So, you know I’ve been there, seen that, done that. And I’m again very powerless to change things.
Isabel describes moderate stress and conflict in her life. This conflict is seemingly related to her dual-role identity. Isabel finds it very difficult to finish her dissertation while taking care of her son full time, and fears that it will never get done. Isabel’s marriage has also experienced a significant amount of stress—their worst fights—over Isabel’s desires to return to work part time in the near future. We will also see that Isabel is torn about fulfilling the gender stereotypes that she despises, but doing what is right for her and her family. This results in some degree of self-doubt, anger, and confusion.

Madhu seems to have only a few areas of conflict as she tries to live out her career and family goals. The most obvious is her frustration in being at home. She misses her role as medicine and is anxious to return to it. She says: this is not my job; this is not what I have learned. Madhu knows, however, that she can return to her medical practice at any time. So, although she experiences some day to day boredom, she knows that it is a very temporary state; she has the freedom to choose otherwise. Secondly, Madhu feels some guilt about her extensive use of childcare. She tearfully describes how her oldest son did not know her as a mother, but as a friend or auntie.
Katherine expresses relatively low levels of tension in our interview. She is very comfortable with her decision to postpone her career in nutrition to stay home with her young children. She has minimal concerns about the benefits of daycare that her children may be missing out on social interaction. She also notes a decrease in time she spends with her husband since the birth of her children.

Overall, Angela also reports little significant conflict among her roles. In fact, she reports having the best of both worlds as a mother and part-time psychologist. What seems to be of greatest concern to her is separation from her daughter; it makes her downright panicky. At this time, Angela’s job is her family’s only source of income, therefore she does not have the option to cut down any more than she already has in order to spend more time with her daughter.

Sources of Tension

Next, I will outline and discuss some of the common sources of tension as described by the women of this study. They include: Self, Child, Relationship with Spouse, and Gender Expectations.
(1) Self

Choices Incompatible with Self

Feeling incomplete/unbalanced. One source of tension that falls under the category of Self is mentioned by some of the at-home women. It is described as feeling incomplete, or not whole. Most of the women attribute this feeling to the absence of achievement or outside work they once enjoyed. Up until the time they had their first child, these women developed their achieving Selves; outside achievement is likely a part of their personalities and became an integral part of their identities. Without that part, they now feel not quite whole. You get a sense from Maria, for example, that although she loves her husband and daughter and finds a great deal of joy in caring for her family, that something is missing:

The hardest thing about staying home is not being able to completely feel satisfied 100% with what I want to do. I feel that I haven’t finished doing what I committed myself to doing. I still haven’t put my medical knowledge into practice and that bothers me every day. I know I’m going to get there, but it’s just that waiting. I’m very happy as a mother and as a spouse, but I need a little bit of that professional part of me. I think that would make me a much happier person.

Isabel feels like something’s missing because she has not fulfilled her goal of attaining a Ph.D. Having a
doctorate has become a vital part of her identity; without it, she may always feel incomplete.

But I guess the hardest part has to do with my unfinished degree. I want to finish so badly, but it's just not getting done. I need to do this or I will always feel like something's missing. I would regret it for the rest of my life. But I can't do both...be a full-time mom and a scholar.

Isabel also understands that she needs to work outside the home in order to fulfill her achievement needs. This sense of fulfillment would, in turn, make her a better mother.

I need to work outside the home. I love my son and I enjoy spending time with him, but I do not feel balanced. I think I would be an even better mom if I had some time away to fulfill the other parts of myself. My husband jokes and says "If mom's happy, everybody's happy." And I think that to a degree that is true. How can I give and give to my son if I don't feel satisfied with my own life?

Nan, although she works full-time as a physician, also feels imbalanced. This feeling stems from the stress and strain of her life which forbids her to pursue some crucial parts of her self.

If I can live fifteen more years (laughs) and bank enough. I am out the door. And then what I call my "real life" will start. Things that I've always been wanting to do and never had time to do since I got on the treadmill I will finally get a chance to do. (Nan)

As part of this feeling of incompleteness, some of the at-home women feel that at-home work does not provide them with the sense of accomplishment they enjoyed in their
previous careers. Furthermore, they miss the sense of task completion and goal achievement they once had. Although Katherine expressed little conflict in our interview, she did report missing the feeling of accomplishment that her work as a researcher allowed her:

There is a sense of getting things done and accomplishing things while working that you don’t get when you stay at home. It was just so nice sometimes to go into the lab and work on something and get results that were meaningful. I could say I accomplished something today. I feel like I didn’t just waste my day away. That’s a feeling that doesn’t come along very often staying home. Because raising kids, your goal is never really reached.

Teresa also misses a feeling of achievement in her life. She finds little reward in the mundane tasks of housekeeping, which never gives her a sense of completion:

There’s just a sense of accomplishment you get at work. You kind of get back what you put into it. Here, I’m expected to do what I do. That’s it. You don’t get a thank you for every little thing you do. You know? It’s not like you ever get a break from it either. You don’t get to finish a thought. Those are the things that are not rewarding. The thankless part is the cleaning and stuff. You don’t see anything in return for doing the dishes or making the meals. You see your children grow up and that’s the rewarding part of it, but as for the cleaning...if I could give that job away, I’d do it in a minute. Any trained monkey could do that kind of work.

Not using degree, training, skills. Another source of tension for the at-home mothers is the feeling that they
are not using the education and extensive training they spent so many years attaining. Maria states:

You know, I stay home with my daughter and I study and that’s about it. It’s like, I don’t want to feel that all of the effort that I put into getting my degree just went down the drain. You know what I mean?

This is also a source of concern for Teresa. She expresses fear that she will not be able to re-enter the work force if she wants or needs to because of outdated training and unused skills:

I’m very rusty. I’ve been out of the work force for so long. I feel that I catch on to things very quickly and that’s my saving grace, but my skills are very, very outdated. I’d have to go back and retrain. So that’s a concern.

Madhu also fears that she will lose her skills if her time away from medicine extends much longer:

Staying at home is not too relaxing for me. This is not my job. This is not what I’ve learned. This is just a part-time passion. I can cook, I can take care of children. But my profession is being a doctor. That is where my dedication is and I want to do that. To me it is like, oh no, I will lose my skills. Honest to God, I think if you have the skills and abilities, you should use them. It can be anything. If you are a good teacher, you should teach. If you are a good doctor, you should practice medicine. It should be appreciated by others too. I always feel that probably I can’t be the best mom, and I don’t think that I can be the best wife in the world. But I do think that I could be a good doctor if not one of the best.
Compatible Choice—Too Many Demands

Falling behind in career. Both at-home and employed women expressed some concerns about keeping up with their careers. For Lynn, it is not having the time to keep up with the current medical literature.

I have all of this guilt being at home, and not spending time with her but then not having enough time to study, or stealing away for an hour or sitting on the bed with a book on my lap but not really studying it. So, I’m falling behind. I know I’m falling behind. I can just feel it. There is certain studying that I should be doing, and I keep putting it off and putting it off and putting it off.

For Maria and Isabel, it is not having the time to study for boards or write a dissertation to finish their degrees:

I never really had time to study myself. With the baby it was too difficult. You always think that when they get older it will get easier. But I find that now at this age she’s almost four and requires even more time. Now it’s like, “Mom, I want to go to the movies. Mom, I want to do this. Mom, take me to gymnastics. Mom, read me a book.” She wants to color together. And I will say to her “You color while mommy reads. Remember, we can’t talk right now because mommy wants to be a doctor.” I tell her that all of the time. But I know that for the boards from my husband’s experiences and from self-tests, if you want to do a good exam you need to dedicate at least six to eight hours a day and really concentrate on it. I haven’t been able to do that. With her, it’s hard. (Maria)

I guess that ultimately I’m home and am supposed to be finishing my dissertation, but you know how that goes. I work on it in bits and pieces and then find myself frustrated with my son when he wants my attention or wakes up early from a nap. The days seem to go more smoothly if I don’t set goals for getting my writing
done. It’s always looming there, though, and it really stresses me out. Some days I think it will never get done. What if it doesn’t? I think I will deeply regret that. I have worked so hard for so many years. It’s not just that. I love what I do. I love to write and read and think...it gives me energy. (Isabel)

Housework. One concern of the women who work outside the home is not being able to keep their houses up to a certain standard. Lynn decided that with such limited free time, she would rather spend time with her daughter than clean her house. Thus, she hired a housekeeper. This did not happen for Lynn, however, without both financial and emotional strain:

I’ve hired someone to clean the house a couple of times because we don’t have time to do it ourselves. It’s a lot of money and I hate paying that kind of money, but...it’s like either spend half a Saturday cleaning the house well or play with the baby. And it’s still a big secret. I don’t let my mom know. My parents came down about three weekends ago, and I asked [the cleaning person] to come that Saturday. It was a huge, huge deal with me that she’d get out of the house before my parents got here. My mom would not look upon it well. No. Like, I don’t know why you can’t take care of your own house. Or oh, you’re a doctor now, you can pay someone to clean your house; I never had that luxury. That would be worse than if she showed up and the house was trashed.

Nzingha discusses the standards of the house she grew up in and how she fails to approach that level of cleanliness in her own house. This, as is apparent in her statement, bothers her to a significant degree:
I grew up in a house where floors were vacuumed every Saturday. Where the bed was made every day and the towels were washed once a week and the sheets were washed every two weeks. Where the bathroom was cleaned every week and the kitchen was mopped and cleaned every week. That is the standard of cleanliness that I am used to. So for me now to be able to sit back and say that it has probably been a month since our carpet has been vacuumed, and where I know it’s been almost a year since our oven has been cleaned...where I settle now for loading the dishwasher during the week and only running the dishwasher once a week. But he looks at that and says that I haven’t compromised at all on the housework. WHAT?!? You have no idea how I would be if I actually demanded this house be kept up in the way that I would ideally want it to be kept up. You don’t understand how much I have already compromised.

One gets a clear sense of the resentment Nan feels about having to take care of her house in this statement:

The only thing I don’t value is taking care of a stupid house. I hate that. I hate having to buy food and put it on the table. I hate having to take care of laundry. I hate shopping for stuff for the house. I hate maintaining the house. I never wanted to be a housewife. I am not a housewife. I never have been, I never will be. And I hate that. If I could hire it all out, I would. In a heartbeat. I have no ego associated with a clean kitchen floor. None.

Angela describes a state of "chaos" in her own home.

She is frustrated by it as well, but does not seem to let it bother her as much as the other women:

Nobody takes care of the house as well as they should! Let’s put it that way. The house is usually in a state of mayhem. That bothers me, but you know, I have to say that it is not as much of a priority as the other things. But it really is completely chaotic.
No time for self. Both the at-home and employed mothers describe having little time for themselves. For some, this is a greater strain than for others. Although it is worth mentioning for Gladys and Katherine, they report only minimal tension about this issue. Gladys states that the only thing I’m compromising at this point is leisure time. She used to participate in sports and hobbies. She also has an artistic side and enjoys writing poetry. But now, since she has children, there is no time. Katherine laughs as she admits this:

Actually, I have a problem with my shoulder and have been going to physical therapy for the past six weeks. And that’s just like...great. Most people consider going to physical therapy a chore, but not me. There are no kids with me and it’s an hour out of the house to myself.

Teresa and Isabel, as full-time mothers, express moderate tension about feeling that they give so much of themselves as mothers, that they do very little for themselves:

There are some days when I feel that all I do is give, give, give. I volunteer, I’m at home. So, sometimes I think I need things for myself. For me, nobody else. Just for me. (Teresa)

There are days where I just don’t want to be a mom. I want to curl up with a book, sit in the tub, or go to a movie, or...ANYTHING. I just want some time to myself. God, I feel horrible saying that, especially since we worked so hard to have him. But there are days when I don’t feel like playing or changing
diapers or reading stories. I just want to be the old me. But mom’s don’t get breaks on a whim. (Isabel)

Nan’s lack of self-care has reached a critical mass. She has serious concerns about her physical and mental health:

But I feel like I’m 40 trapped in a 60 year-old body. I ache, I hurt, I eat like shit, I don’t sleep, I don’t exercise and I’m not doing anything to maintain myself. And I’m feeling it. Everything needs maintenance. The house needs maintenance, financial records need maintenance, the car needs maintenance, the job needs maintenance. Maintenance on me is going to take a good hour a day and I don’t have an hour a day. I am too busy holding everything else together.

(2) Child

The second major source of tension that came up time and again for all of the women was their child. As stated earlier, the well-being of their children was at the forefront of these women’s minds in most of their career-related decisions. All of the women I spoke with were concerned that their children were somehow negatively impacted by their decisions.

Separation from child. One of the most difficult aspects of working outside the home is physical separation from children. For many women, this separation occurred only a few weeks postpartum. Maria recalls returning to medical school only ten days after giving birth to her daughter. She states: Those first three months for me
were the most difficult ones because that was the time that I really wanted to be at home for her and I couldn’t.

Lynn and Nan also describe, with a mixture of sadness and frustration, their return to work after minimal maternity leave:

One of the things that I was real bitter about is six weeks is way too early to go back. You’ve just developed a routine. You’ve just developed a real, real bond. I couldn’t drop her off at the sitters the first time; my husband had to. The first day I was happy until about noon and then I started getting sad. Around two o’clock I just got so mad and that night I sat there and nursed her and bawled. I’m like it’s not fair! I can’t do this to her! I still get mad about it. (Lynn)

I was forced to go back to work three weeks postpartum after a really difficult delivery. I never had a chance to enjoy the infant. It was just a huge huge burden. (Nan)

Angela continues to struggle with separation from her daughter while she is at work. She says:

The hard part of doing both is definitely being away from her. I don’t like being away from her. I’d say that for the first many months I was downright panicky about being away from her.

Finally, Nhzinga discusses her permanent future separation from her daughter with great pain:

Separation from her is going to be hell. Is that enough of an answer? I think it’s going to be incredibly painful. It won’t hit during the day because I already don’t see her during the day. But it will probably hit when I go home and there’s nobody
There's no big old two-toothed smile. No arms reaching out to me. Seeing that beautiful little face...that's when it's going to hit. Time for child.

What seems to be equally difficult for the women who work outside the home is not spending enough time, day to day, with their children. Lynn explicitly states that the hardest part is not spending enough time with her. Nzingha also regrets that she does not spend enough time with her. In fact, she partially blames a common cold on her absence; she wonders if she was at home more, if her daughter may have avoided the illness.

The worst thing is feeling like you are not spending enough time with her. Feeling like there's something else you should be doing. Like, when she got sick I had so much guilt about that. What was I supposed to do that I didn't do? What was I supposed to do that I didn't do because I spend 12 hours a day away from her.

Finally, Gladys expresses a similar feeling of conflict between her work demands and spending time with her children. She explains:

It's hard when you have a stupid exam! You want to spend time with them but you just have to study. Then I feel guilty because I have to study. Like during my generals. It was ten weeks, a take-home exam. It was pretty much sitting down at the computer, trying to have quiet time. But I didn't share enough time with them.
Breastfeeding. Another common concern among some the women who work outside the home is their inability to breastfeed their children. Knowing of the health-related benefits for their babies, they are conflicted when work schedules do not allow for an extended period of breastfeeding. Maria states:

I breastfed her until she was 3 ½ months then I couldn’t do it any longer. It was too much and I couldn’t handle it. I couldn’t do it because I had so much to do for medical school. I tried to pump and keep some milk at home, but if I couldn’t he would just give her formula. I didn’t want that.

And Nzingha states:

I had to stop breastfeeding because I wasn’t getting enough rest and wasn’t producing enough milk. So after like three weeks we had to start supplementing with a bottle and then by the time she was two months she was on the bottle totally. I didn’t want that. I wanted to breastfeed her until she was six months. There was a tremendous amount of guilt that went with that.

Use of childcare. Childcare was a source of stress for all of the women working outside of the home and some of the at-home mothers. Some working mothers have reservations about putting young children in daycare. Madhu, for example, talks about how she would not need to put her children in daycare if she still lived in India.

The problem with childcare did arise when we moved from our country to this place. Because in India it’s so supportive. You just stay in the same house so anybody who lives in the house takes care of the
babies. You don’t need a babysitter. Their grandparents are there. Aunts and uncles are there. In the Indian society it’s like living in a joint family. You live and eat in the same part. You live in the same household, you just have different bedrooms. You share a common living room and dining room. So that question wouldn’t have arisen if we were in India. But it did come up here.

Madhu also expressed, very tearfully, that her son spent so much time in daycare that he no longer saw her as his mother, but a friend or auntie:

I think that being a professional I have some guilt pangs about not being there for my own child. Some babysitter telling me that today he walked or today he talked. I used to cry about it. I actually told the babysitter, “you are being the mom and I am missing out on my own child.” That is very hard. There were days when he would never even see my face because I used to drop him at 6:30 in the morning and pick him up at 10:00 at night when he was fast asleep. In those six months of time the babysitter was the mom and I was just a friend or an auntie or something. He wouldn’t even recognize me.

Gladys also expresses some concerns about the quality of care that her children receive:

With my second child I didn’t have the opportunity to have him at home...and maybe that’s my regret. It’s kind of hard to put a little three-month old baby in child care. We do that because we don’t have any support right now as far as friends that can stay with the kids and our schedules don’t match at all. We would like to have him at least more in touch with mom and dad for the first few years. Yeah, it’s hard. You don’t know if they’re getting good care. You’re the mommy and you’re the poppy so you think you’re the only one that can do it really well. You’re not sure if they are loving them, or nurturing them. That was probably the only thing that bothers or concerns me.
Similar to Gladys, Lynn wondered if her child's daycare provider was an adequate substitute for the care she would receive from her own mother. She states:

He let me decide about daycare. He didn't care if she went to daycare but I did, and I care a lot. I was willing to sacrifice my whole salary just for the right care. He wasn't quite willing to sacrifice that much! He said I don't understand why it's that big a deal to you. I think it's such a big deal because I want to find someone that would be a substitute for me. And I can't.

Nzingha has such grave concerns about daycare that she is not willing to use it at all.

I think she's entirely too young to be in a daycare full of strangers. You hear too many crazy stories about awful things happening in daycare to children, especially to little girls. That's not fair; that's not the life I want for her.

Interestingly and surprisingly, the at-home mothers also expressed concerns about daycare: NOT using it. Some fear that their child may be missing out on important social interaction and other benefits that daycare can provide:

My neighbors' kids are out interacting with other kids for half of the day. They are in different social situations. And I do worry about that with my son. I think that if he were around kids more often he'd develop different qualities that would help him down the road. Yeah, there are benefits to having kids in daycare where they are interacting with other kids. (Katherine)
Teresa’s doubts are apparent in a similar statement:

I change my mind every single day wondering if I’ve made the right decision. Would they be more independent if they were in a day care center or would they? Would they be socially better off?

(3) Relationship with spouse

General stressors and strains in their marriages were a common theme in our discussions of conflict. Some of the marital strains were unique to dual roles; others were those that inevitably occur after the life-changing event of the birth of a child. I will focus this discussion on those areas of marital stress that can be attributed to the unique situations of high-achieving mothers.

Even before their child was born, Nzingha expressed a great deal of conflict with her husband regarding her outside achievement goals:

We got married during the last year in my master’s degree and he was already pulling this stuff about the time and energy I had to spend with him. He was already complaining about getting my “leftovers”. He says that people at school get all your best stuff and then you get home and I get the dregs. He’d already been making those comments.

After the birth of their daughter, nine months after their wedding, things got worse:

He was absolutely useless. I would have to wake up to wake him up to feed her. He didn’t want to wake up. He didn’t want to do it. He was like [mimics a whiny voice] “I would but I just can’t. I just can’t do it”. He was watching the baby during the day. So,
I would get home he felt it was my turn. In spite of the fact that I was get up at 6:30 in the morning and not getting home until 7:00 at night and had to cook dinner most of the time. And then you want me to be wife to you and be mommy full time once I get home. Housework really didn’t get done during the day so I’d have to do that too. There aren’t enough hours in the day. I still have to do homework. When am I supposed to study? When am I supposed to just be able to relax and not be anything?

For Nzingha, her relationship with her husband is her greatest source of strain in trying to balance her career and family life. She states:

I believe that I don’t have any tension doing my Ph.D. outside of the normal stuff. I’m loving what I’m doing. And I love being a mother. The tension is coming in having to live up to his cock-eyed ideal. I think he thinks marriage is that he doesn’t have to compromise. He gets to put in whatever effort in terms of maintaining the relationship and in terms of maintaining the household as he’s comfortable with at the time. I’m supposed to pick up all of the slack or let it be without complaining. I’m supposed to be able to go out there and be a student all day and give my best there and come home and still have all my best to give to him and be able to pamper him the way he feels he should be pampered. I can’t handle that. That’s too much stress.

Of a less serious degree, Lynn expresses some frustration around her husband’s inability to “get it”. More specifically, he doesn’t understand why it is so hard for her to be away from their baby all day long.

I don’t know why he doesn’t get it. I mean, he sympathizes, I suppose. He knows that it makes me upset, but I couldn’t understand why he wasn’t upset when he had to go to work and leave her.
For Teresa, the strain in her marriage comes from trying to vicariously live out her achieving self through her husband’s career:

The decision that I made to stay home can sometimes put a strain on your marriage because I tend to live vicariously through him and his success. His successes are my successes, his setbacks I take on as my setbacks. I live through his job. It’s just stressful. I lose patience when he’s not doing things the way I would. I have to learn that I can’t live vicariously through him career-wise. I have to find my own career.

And for Maria, some marital tension surfaces when she feels that her husband is not interested in how she spends her days at home:

I never heard a good word from him like he always came home and we always talked about him and we never talked about me. It was like we had nothing important to say about what I did here at home. So that was what kind of put me in that mood. I was like, God how am I spending my days? What am I doing?

Isabel and her husband have had their worst fights since the birth of their son. The conflict is directly related to Isabel wanting to combine her family and career roles. It surrounds a previous agreement between the couple to both work part time and share their son’s care. Her husband no longer agrees to this and Isabel is very angry:

I recently brought up our plan to both work part time and I was surprised to find that he’s had a change of heart. Bottom line is that he realizes that you can’t
climb the law ladder as quickly or as high when you are part time. No shit! I also know that I probably can’t be a tenured professor if I work part time either. But I think that it is the best way for us both to have a career and also be there for our family. So we’ve had a few major fights about that. Probably the worst fights we’ve ever had. I never thought I would face this, but I am pretty torn. I get mad at my husband for reneging on our deal to both work part time. I always thought that other professional couples had these issues and that we were somehow above all of that. You know, I married a sensitive 90s man. Ha.

Nan also admits that her husband’s illness has created some strain on her, especially since the birth of their second child:

It’s no secret that my husband has Parkinson’s and he can’t stay up with the baby. He can’t wake up anymore. His manual dexterity is such that he has real difficulty changing a diaper when it happens at night and he’s off his meds. It’s very hard for him to dress and undress the baby. I’ve done 95% of all the parenting of this child despite the fact I have a full-time job.

**No time as a couple.** Having no time as a couple is one stressor that career women and their spouses face. For example:

We catch meals as we can now. That’s changed. We try to have meals together but it’s different. One of us will be holding her, cooking. And then we’ll sit down and we’ll eat, but then the whole time, we don’t even talk to each other. We’re playing with her. We’re picking up toys off the floor. And then we’re having intermittent conversations. (Lynn)
However, this is a reality of the at-home mothers as well. Gladys, Katherine, and Maria feel that their marriages do not get as much attention as they once did:

The only thing that I am compromising at this point is probably leisure time with my husband. Or I cannot get out as often as I want to with my husband, you know, just by ourselves. But, you can be creative. You know, pick up a tape or just watch a movie at home. (Gladys)

Definitely, not being able to go out. We used to go out to women’s volleyball games or a club on Friday nights. Or we’d go out together to buy a garbage can. We don’t do that anymore. We’d stop off and have dinner. That doesn’t happen anymore. It’s more like, I’ll run errands while you stay home with the kids. There are definitely changes since we had the kids. We’re not free to do as much anymore. (Katherine)

Time is one of the major things that I wish we could have a little bit more of. Especially be able at least to sit for one meal together and not just on the weekends. It’s really the weekends that mainly he’s here. We don’t have lunch or dinner together, not even breakfast. And we don’t go to mass together anymore. I miss him. You try to understand it and get used to it, but it’s hard. (Maria)

(4) Money

Lynn and Nzihinga feel the strain of finances on their lives. Loans and bills limit their choices regarding their work status. Although they may not change their employment status if money wasn’t an issue, it seems as if the fact that they do not have a choice is frustrating to them.

A lot of my stress is because of my student loans. He actually makes enough money that we could go without my salary and be comfortable. You know, we wouldn’t
end up paying daycare. We could make it very easily, but you know, I’m over one hundred thousand dollars in debt. What would we do if I quit? (Lynn)

She was born in April and the job that my husband had was going to lay him off in May. So, it was like I need to go back to work. I need the income in order to keep the bills afloat. And so that ended up being not quite four weeks when she was home that I was able to stay home. So I wasn’t fully recuperated by any stretch of the imagination. (Nzingha)

Isabel’s tension regarding money takes on a slightly different form:

One thing that has bothered me recently...and I was kind of surprised at myself...is not having an income. Yeah, I guess I could say that I make ½ of my husband’s salary, but it’s just not the same. I don’t like being dependent on him for money. It’s not like he gets mad when I spend money or he uses it against me in any way...it just makes me...well, uneasy. You give up a part of your independence when you rely on someone else totally for an income.

And Nan feels that she has to continue an unhealthy lifestyle because she may soon be the only source of income in her household:

I’ve also got my husband’s Parkinson’s to consider. De facto, I will be our long-term wage earner. There’s a lot of pressure on me to save for retirement and to pick up the slack when my husband’s health starts to fail. We have to put the kids through school and I still want to have a life at the end of that. It takes money to do all of that.
Gender expectations

A general sense of frustration was apparent when I asked the participants about the current status of gender roles, stereotypes, and bias.

The gender role thing bothers me. I think that it was in the ancient past that certain things have to be done by certain sexes. You know, that the man is the sole breadwinner of the house. I think that it is more of the womenfolk who are putting in between family, housework, and outside work too. For example, when I was working I was not only a doctor. I was a mom. I was a wife. I was a housewife, keeping track of everything at home, doing the cooking, the cleaning, the laundry, the dishes. Everything. So how come then we are not the stronger sex? I think we are. (Madhu)

I was ten weeks pregnant and hadn’t told anybody because I knew that it was going to be a bad thing. My program director had said in my annual evaluation “Doctor you are well on your way to chief resident as you continue using birth control.” I had to call lawyers, I had to put people on retainer, I had to go to the chairman and tell him what the program director told me. Basically I lost a chief residency over it. At every step of the way it was made difficult. I assumed the role of mom and had my professional life blow up in my face. It was not a good thing. (Nan)

Women are in the workforce more now and men are trying to become more involved with the family. So, you would think that both should be sharing taking care of kids. But I think that society still expects for women that if you are working, fine. But if you are a mom, boy, you are the mom. And the men are still the breadwinner and don’t have as many responsibilities at home. (Gladys)

I still believe that society thinks that women should stay home with the kids and the father should work. Even in this day and age. I know that companies can pay lip service to paternity leave for three months
but it never works out. They are not really supported. I think it’s great if fathers stay home and the mother goes to work. I think that’s fine. There’s no problem with that. But I think society in general still says that women should stay home and men should work. I think that for women who do work and have kids, I think they have a terrible time at the work place. Again, companies and universities may say that it’s no problem, but when your child is sick and you have to take time off it’s terribly difficult either way. (Katherine)

Not fulfilling them. Despite frustration with existing gender stereotypes and oppression, some of the women feel badly about not fulfilling them:

That’s where all of my guilt comes in. I’m expected...or at least I expect myself to do certain things because I’m the woman. Like nursing, and like putting good healthy meals on the table, and doing things for other people. With my job I’m just not going to be able to do those things for everyone the way I want to. (Lynn)

I’m really not wired probably the way most women are. That’s the hardest part. It’s knowing that your own expectation of what you should be doing and what imagine others’ expectations are about what you should be doing and what’s actually happening. Those moments when you get reminded that the reality and the expectations are not jiving. That’s hard. (Nzingha)

Fulfilling them. Other women hate the fact that what they have chosen to do, like stay home with their children, fits a stereotype of women. Teresa finds herself wanting to justify to others, including me, why she stays home. She fears that people will assume that she stays home because she thinks that is what women are supposed to do.
I’m the perfect stereotype. I’ve done everything that I said is falling into certain gender roles. I hate that. I mean, I quit my job and I’m home with my kids. The fact that I fit the traditional stereotype...I feel like I constantly have to justify my choice. I have to justify why I stay home. Mostly to myself but to everyone. Like to you right now. To my friends, my family, my kids. You feel like you have to justify why you aren’t working even though you went through college. And you have to defend why you made this decision...that you really thought about it and didn’t just do something because it is what women do.

Isabel also regrets the fact that she has fulfilled society’s expectations for her as a woman. She feels that she has disappointed women in general and has even hurt women’s cause for equality by postponing her career to stay home with her children:

But I think that and here I am fitting the perfect gender stereotype. Sometimes I think that I owe it to women in general to get out there and work. I’m intelligent, hard-working...I think that I could also be a role model for other young women. Right now I feel like my message would be, “Yes, pursue your career goals. But only until you have a child.” That sucks.

**Nature of Tension**

How do these sources of tension manifest themselves?

1. **Guilt**

More than half of the women that I spoke with used the term “guilt” to describe their tension. I never asked a question resembling “Do you feel guilty...?”, the term came up on its own repeatedly throughout the interviews. For example, Nzingha describes the guilt she feels about
divorcing her husband and subjecting her daughter to a single-parent household:

Having my daughter is making what I feel what needs to happen now a hell of a lot more difficult because, of course, [my husband] is using her as a way to guilt-trip me. Like, how can you rip this family apart?? We both grew up in single-parent households and we never wanted that for our children and now you are going to do just that.

Madhu mentions guilt about not having enough time to spend with her eldest son now that she has the responsibility of a newborn:

So for me I was having this guilt pang, and I cried. I felt that my God for the first time in my life I can imagine my own child’s pain. I cannot give him time. He wanted his own special time. He did not want me to carry the baby and be with him. He wanted me to put the baby down.

Gladys feels remorse when she needs to work at home and cannot spend time with her children:

I feel guilty because I want to be with them and I can’t because I have to work. Like during my generals. It was ten weeks, a take-home exam. It was pretty much sitting down at the computer, trying to have quiet time. But I didn’t share enough time with them.

Isabel has feelings of guilt about pursuing her career if it means putting her son in daycare:

I would feel much better...less guilty...about pursuing my own career if I knew he was with his dad and not in daycare. I never thought I would face this, but I am pretty torn. I will have to get over the guilt that I am the one “sticking her in daycare” and get over the feeling that I’m being selfish.
Lynn mentions her guilt on three separate occasions during our conversation. First, it is about not having time to study because of her baby. Or, it is not having time for her baby because of studying:

I have all of this guilt being at home, and not spending time with her but then not having enough time to study, or stealing away for an hour or sitting on the bed with a book on my lap but not really studying it.

Lynn also feels badly that she does not provide the type of family life for her child that she enjoyed growing up:

That just heaps more guilt on to me. Because my dad...he’s a banker. He worked at seven thirty and he walked into the house at ten to five, every single day. So...we’d sit down and have dinner at five thirty as a family. We don’t do that here.

And finally, Lynn expresses regrets about not living up to certain expectations of her:

I guess that’s where all of my guilt comes in. Well, because I’m expected...or at least I expect myself to do certain things because I’m the woman.

Teresa feels badly asking for help with childcare so that she can work outside the home:

I’ve always felt, too, that I was imposing on my mom. I knew my mom had raised her five kids and here she is with mine. I always felt that little twinge of guilt I guess. But other than that, the job itself was good for me.

And although Maria does not use the term “guilt” directly, you get a sense that she feels badly about wanting to
pursue her medical career. Here, she reiterates that she
loves her child very much and does not want to give me any
other impression:

I don’t want to be contradicting in what I’m saying. I do love these years that I’ve been able to stay with my daughter. I don’t think I would change that. If someone said if I could put things back and even if you had all of that money the first and second year of her life, would you put her into a daycare? I wouldn’t have done it. Because those years...even now I spend such good time with her.

Angela, Katherine, and Nan do not allude to feelings of guilt during our discussion. As we will see, their conflict manifests itself in other ways.

(2) Anger

The second most common manifestation of tension for these women appears to be feelings of anger. Although none of the women directly stated “I am angry”, their words, intonation, and facial expressions gave a clear sense that this is what they were experiencing.

Much of this anger seemed to be directed toward spouses. Nzingha’s vehemence is the most dramatic:

And I’m dealing with a man who does not believe that this [divorce] is happening. He’s totally in denial. [laughs] I wrote him this letter trying to help him understand what I am going through here and why I need to leave this marriage. He writes me back and doesn’t address anything I said. And I’m just like, hello? HELLO?? I AM LEAVING! GET A CLUE! GET A FUCKING CLUE. I’M LEAVING.
Maria’s anger toward her husband is the result of her recognition that she has not had the same opportunities to pursue her career as he has. She is also angry that men still get it all:

It’s not fair. I will not get his same opportunities. He studied for boards for two months every day. He didn’t have to worry about our daughter, the house, dinner, bills, nothing. Totally, disconnected from all of that to study. Men still get all of it. My husband is really good with our daughter, but I was the one who stayed and sacrificed. It will be that way for the next couple of years. It’s very hard. Yesterday, he was very positive about everything. He said that maybe I could go to a Kaplan course and that way I could get a good score and get into a residency next year. I just looked at him and I smiled. Like, you think about it. That’s what I mean about the difference between men and women. They don’t think about the details. Who would stay with our daughter? Who is going to dress her, feed her, and get her to school?

Isabel is very angry with her husband for “reneging” on their agreement to both work part-time and to share the childcare responsibilities. Here, she describes his career ambition with some bitterness:

But I think he’s gotten a little caught up in the whole grind...you know what they do to new attorneys. It can be such a boys’ club...it’s like a fraternity and he is going through the hazing right now. I think he might be worried that he won’t be a full-fledged member of the “club” if he goes part time.
Nzingha is not only angry with her husband, but with men in general. She is also angry at some women, their mothers, for encouraging and perpetuating gender stereotypes:

I think a lot of this has to do with men’s gender role expectations and what they saw their mother’s do. In some ways I blame [my husband’s] mother for a lot of the things that are wrong with him! [laughs] I blame his father too, for not being there. And living in the same city and not being involved has been very problematic. I think it’s definitely men’s understanding of gender roles. It is a very, very, very rare man who don’t feel that way. But a lot of people say they don’t feel that way, but when they actually have to act it out...

Some of Nan’s anger, or “resentment” is directed toward her family’s needs and the affect it’s had on her independence:

I try to accept and understand that for a very long period in my life, my needs and the child’s needs will not be the same and his needs come first. There are times when I resent that instead of accept it. Not so much with this pregnancy and this child because I think I really already made the adjustment. But with my first child, I really resented that I couldn’t sleep at night and I couldn’t get up and do the things that I wanted to do when I wanted to do them. I’ve spent my whole entire adult life being able to do that and all of the sudden I couldn’t do anything that I wanted to do. That’s hard for someone who is as driven as I am and who has things that I want to accomplish. I’ve been so independent all of my life; I’ve had to be. Now it’s not a matter of independence. Now it’s even worse. Now I not only don’t get help but I also have to be there and do everything for everybody.
During our interview, Isabel also becomes very angry with herself for feeling guilty:

I will have to get over the guilt that I am the one “sticking her in daycare” and get over the feeling that I’m being selfish. God, where in the hell did that come from? I don’t think that other women who pursue their careers are selfish. It’s so maddening to think I’ve spent all of these years becoming aware of sexism and feminism and all of that...and here I am with these antiquated beliefs of my own. Ugh!

Nan’s anger and bitterness comes through in her response to a question I asked about what advice she would give to a woman contemplating a dual role life:

I’d tell her to marry wealthy. I tell her to marry wealthy and make sure there’s no pre-nup. I tell you, if your job is to be blonde and skinny, it’s a lot easier to do that than hustle as hard as I am now. So, marry wealthy. No, marry old and wealthy.

(3) Depression

Both Nan and Maria experienced significant periods of depression that they attribute to their work and family conflicts. For Nan, this depression occurred soon after the birth of her first son. She says that the affect that his birth had on her role as a resident physician was devastating:

When our son came, I had a period of very significant postpartum depression, mostly because the life that I had worked so hard for was basically blowing up in my face because of motherhood. It was very hard to deal with that.
Maria has had more recent bouts with depression due to feeling stuck at home:

I’ve had moments where I have diagnosed myself with mild depression. That was toward the beginning of my husband’s career. I am like I came all of this way, and now I’m here stuck at home. That’s how I felt. I’m here stuck at home and everything I did was based on my daughter. I didn’t do anything for myself or for us because he was never home. It was so hard. I was like, I can’t take this. I don’t see my husband. If this is going to be like this for three years, I’m not going to be able to handle it.

(4) Exhaustion

Busy schedules and no time to take care of the self create a sense of exhaustion in the women I interviewed. The conflict and tension discussed in previous sections seems only to exacerbate the situation. Gladys recalls her exhaustion as a pregnant Ph.D. student. She says:

When I was pregnant I was really tired when I was taking classes. Sometimes I would actually fall asleep in the classroom. And now, sometimes I just work really late after they fall asleep. Most times I’m very very tired. It’s a combination of everything.

Nzingha talks about her experiences as a new mother. Due to financial stressors, Nzingha had to return to work and school after only three weeks postpartum. As is the case with many new mothers, sleep was scarce. This took a toll on Nzingha’s health and well-being:

There were days when she was at the breast constantly. Constantly! It was like you’d nurse her for like 45
minutes, she’d sleep for 15 minutes and she’d wake up hungry again. She wanted more! [laughs] She would always do that starting at like ten o’clock at night [laughs] and go through the entire night. So there would be like no sleep to be had. And I had to get up to go to work no matter what. I was just a sleep deprivation case.

It is not just as new moms that these women are not getting enough sleep. Lynn continues to struggle with fatigue and says: I don’t have enough time for sleep. I get about six hours tops. I don’t know how I do it.

And finally, Nan’s statement about her exhaustion makes one wonder how she is able to maintain her health and her roles:

I don’t know if I can sustain this until next week. I literally go day to day. I get up that day and I’m like “can I make it today?” And with any luck the answer is yes. I try not to project too far. I’ve been desperately trying to go down to 80%. I need that one day because I work 12 days straight a lot of times because we work weekends too. I’m maxed out. There’s not much left.

(5) Self-Doubt

Feelings of self-doubt are most obvious in many of Teresa’s statements. She says: I question my decision to stay home, for sure. You try to justify it every day. She admits to me that she has “problems with self-esteem” which are at the root of her doubts. For example, she often doubts her abilities as a mother. Thus, she wonders why she gave up her career in the first place:
There are always days like that when you feel like they’re at each other’s throats, so obviously I haven’t done a great job, because look at how they’re acting and look at how they’re talking to each other and to me. So, you know, I feel like I must be doing something wrong. I’m not doing any good. So, then you think...you know...they turning out to be decent individuals is the fulfillment in staying home and when they are not a decent individual at that time, you think, what is this all for then? Why did I give up my career? You have that all the time, though. That’s where you have to justify it all of the time. Deep down, is this really the right decision?

Because of these doubts, Teresa often turns to her husband for reassurance and praise:

I think I need my husband to constantly remind me that I’m doing a good job, that the kids are great...just to kind of keep me up. I think that’s where it comes in where he needs to remind me why I’m here. It’s not like I get pay raises to show me that I’m doing a good job or things like that. He needs to be sensitive to that. Where before, when I had a job, I knew by how I was rated and pay raises and vacations and stuff, and things like that how I was doing. So, I didn’t need his approval as much.

Isabel’s doubts about her decision to stay home with her son take the form of justification. Here she describes how she feels the need to explain why she stays home:

It’s funny...no, kind of sad. When people ask me if I stay home I say “Yes.” But then quickly add “...but I’m working on my dissertation too.” It’s like a disclaimer. It’s like I have to justify why I am home...as if being home for my son is not good enough. Or that because I am highly educated I should not be at home. I am not sure why I do that. I think it’s probably because I don’t want people to think that I’m JUST a stay at home mom. I want them to know that it’s only temporary. I think that I’m afraid that people will think I just took the easy way out.
6) Loneliness/Isolation

The isolation of at-home work causes some feelings of loneliness in Isabel:

The isolation is hard too. You can go a whole day without talking to an adult. It can be downright maddening. I seriously think I’m going to go crazy some days. I miss intellectual, stimulating conversation that you get in the classroom or over coffee with colleagues. I miss it. I get so lonely some days that I cry.

Alignment: Making It Work

Although each woman described some sort of tension in her life, most of them reported overall contentment with their lives. Their satisfaction and happiness comes through in the following statements:

Overall, I am very satisfied with my life. A few times a week we just look at each other and it’s just like we’re so happy. (Lynn)

I have a lot of rewards in my life. I really do. I’m really happy with the way our life is (Maria)

Most of the time I am perfectly content to be where I am, staying home with the kids. (Katherine)

Most of the time, I’m satisfied. The grass is always greener on the other side, though. It would be nice to have more money, it would be nice to be with adults...all those things, when you’re having a rough day. But overall I think I’m satisfied. If I weren’t, I don’t think I’d be doing it for this long. (Teresa)
This is what I want to be doing right now. Yes, I think I’d be happier if I worked part time, but overall, I’m very satisfied. I’m happy. (Isabel)

I am happy with what I’ve done and what I’ve achieved in life. Both family and career-wise. (Madhu)

I guess that is what makes me happy, that I’m not compromising one role for the other one. I manage to be a wife, I manage to be a mom, and I manage to be a good employee. (Gladys)

It just sort of feels like I have the best of both worlds. (Angela)

The two women who do not express a great deal of satisfaction with their lives, Nan and Nzingha, still manage to lead successful lives. Both of them function adequately, if not very well, as mothers and professionals.

The next logical question is:

What are some of the ways these women are making it work?

My next task is to uncover the positive ways in which dual-role women manage their lives and the conflict they experience. These questions guided my inquiry: What kind of coping strategies do the women of this study employ that leads to their satisfaction? What about the women who are not satisfied? What do they do to maintain their functioning?
Sequencing

"Sequencing" is the strategy that 100% of the women in this study employ to cope with the challenges of living out their achieving and nurturing selves. How is sequencing different from other sorts of life planning activities? Sequencing is all about timing; it is a process of ordering one's life so that professional and motherhood roles may be fulfilled, but not necessarily at the same time. It involves stops and starts in career and family activities with some overlap. This strategy may be unique to women, and even more unique to professional women. Sequencing involves a great deal of planning, often starting very early in one's development. Questions as to how to order significant career and family events are at the heart of the process. Some of it has to do with priorities; other decisions take into account certain realities and logistics: the length of training required for a certain profession, optimal childbearing years, job market, etc.

All of the women in this study employed sequencing. The planning phase occurred at different points in their development and looked very different for each woman. Some followed what they felt was their original plan, while
others had to reorganize and reorder along the way.
Sequencing, as is illustrated in the next paragraphs, is characterized by compromise and flexibility.

Teresa. Teresa’s sequencing efforts did not start until after her first child was born and problems with daycare arose. For Teresa, her sequencing plan involves children first, career later:

We decided that raising our children was our first priority, and we were young enough that we could, that I could, put my career on hold. After the kids grow up I want to retrain for something I really, really enjoy. Now I know so much more. I know what’s out there.

Even Teresa’s master plan involves a sort of micro-sequencing whereby the job she would choose in the future would allow her to enter and exit the workforce in sync with her children’s school schedules.

And with our family situation the way it is...I think what I would like to do is be in the school system so that I can be home with them after school and during summer vacation.

Teresa’s sequence also includes the long term. It is in ten years, when Teresa is in her forties, that she hopes to begin her professional career:

In ten years...my kids...Peter will be college, and they’re spaced three years apart so in ten years I’d like to see that they are college bound and I am switching gears and starting my own professional career. I’m hoping I’ll be well on my way.
Katherine. Katherine’s sequencing also involves childrearing first, and then a return to the field of nutrition at some unknown time in the future.

I got my degree and can use it at some later point but right now this is what I want to be doing. I do see myself going back to work after the kids are old enough. At this point we don’t know how many kids are going to be coming along...two so far, so it could be more than five years from now.

Katherine, however, does not know what re-entry into nutrition will be like after a significant hiatus. She says that as far as a career is concerned, it can wait. If it’s going to be tough down the road to get back into a profession, I’ll worry about it then. Katherine sums up her sequencing pattern quite nicely here:

I don’t really see anything that I would change that dramatically. I went to college, I worked for a couple of years, I went back to school after we were married, I had two kids...it actually worked out pretty well so far. I plan to go back to work at some point.

Maria. When asked to give advice to other young women, Maria recommends sequencing:

To some point I think that as a woman when you are married and you have your husband in the same field or in a high degree level, you can take some time for motherhood and set your career aside until your child is really ready for that and then go on. (Maria)

Maria’s own sequencing started in medical school. When she was pregnant with her daughter, she strategically planned a cesarean-section, a major surgery, to remove any ambiguity
from her plan. Following ten days of maternity leave, Maria completed the last few months of her medical school training. She recalls:

I did plan the way she was going to arrive. I planned a c-section and in my country you can do that. So I spoke to my O.B. and I told him that I wanted to have her at Easter time vacation which gave me two good weeks. Since I was a student I wouldn't get those three months leave. So I had her c-section. It was the weekend before Easter, so I had almost ten days and everything worked out perfect.

Now Maria is at home full-time with her daughter and plans to return to medicine when her little girl is old enough.

Madhu.

You can't really have both things together. Well, you can but you really have to strike a balance. Somebody has to compromise, whether it is you as the mother or you as the father. I don't know about anybody else. If people have a mutual understanding they can work together and make both of their career dreams come true. (Madhu)

In the above quote, Madhu talks about timing children with careers of both the mother and the father. We have to plan quite a lot, to not have children, and then to have children when you are ready for them, or postpone your own career. That is what it comes to. She describes how she has sequenced her life:

I actually delayed my own career because of my child. Initially, we thought that one child was good enough. I stayed home with him until he was like 18 months. Then I did my residency and got a job. Now I am home
with the second baby. I still want to do a fellowship. So I have in my mind, “Ok, fellowship after the second baby!”

Madhu states that she still not there as far as her career is concerned. She plans to apply for a fellowship and **by the time I am ready my little one will be two years old**. Madhu also says that her husband is still not finished with his training and wants to do another fellowship. **But we decided that I will do my fellowship first, and then he can super-specialize in whatever he wants after that.**

**Angela.** The issue for Angela was also the timing of children. She and her husband postponed children in order to get their careers underway. She describes:

Kids. We had talked about it before we got married. We knew we wanted to have kids, but I think it was mostly a matter of timing that we were concerned about. I didn’t want to start a family until I found a job and we were more financially stable. And then the first year of my job I really wanted to get settled in and figure out what I’m doing.

Today Angela is 37 years old and a new mother. When I asked her if she plans to have any more children, she said **Yes, very soon. I am getting as old as the hills as far as childbearing goes.** She also admitted that because of her
age, she has some concerns about the health of future children due to the increased risk of Down's syndrome and other birth defects.

Gladys. Kids were in the future for Gladys and her husband, but not until they had completed a certain level of their training and education.

We wanted to have kids, that's for sure. We decided we were going to finish... He was applied for the Ph.D. program, but myself only for the masters program. So, we were thinking that after I was done with my masters program MAYBE depending on how our budget is and how things are going maybe we can go with one kid. But definitely the plan was to finish first and get into the Ph.D. program first and then see if we are able to go ahead and have kids. So, we really didn't want kids until after our masters.

Things did not work out exactly as planned for Gladys:

... but things change and we got a surprise baby my first year of the masters program. So I spent the first year being pregnant and the second year of masters already having a kid. So we were like OK! Change plans!

Therefore, as we will see in the next section, Gladys shifted her strategy to working part-time to make things work.

Nzingha. As a teenager, Nzingha had the sequencing all worked out. She recalls:

I was like I'm going to get married, I'm going to have a kid, I'm going to have my Ph.D., I'm going to be working, I'm going to be doing all of this stuff and making crazy money. You know, I'm going to be doing all three of these things and what? Why is that
weird? I was always like, well, I guess until the kids get older I'll just work at home. I'll have a husband who will make enough money that I can stay home and still work from home. And when they go to school I'll go back to work and work until like three so I can be home when they get off school.

Due to various difficult circumstances, primarily financial and marital, this plan did not materialize for Nzingha. The most current plan involves postponing her motherhood role so that she can finish her education.

I have it all mapped out. Me and AT&T are going to be tight. Phone calls every night. And as long as I'm in this city, I've got her every other night, man. Every other weekend, me. Once I move out of state it's going to have to drop down to a lot less than that. Logistically, it's not going to make sense to do every other weekend between the East Coast and here. That's too much moving around for her at that age. So, we'll probably have to end up doing holiday breaks, long weekends, alternate holidays, and summers. Temporarily until the point where she wants to live with her mother. Where that need comes up where I need to be with my mother. I need mom. I think it will happen when she's eleven or twelve.

By the time her daughter is 11 or 12, Nzingha will have her Ph.D. and plans to be settled into her professional life. It is then that she will resume her motherhood role. By ordering her roles this way, Nzingha feels that she can fulfill both her achieving and nurturing roles.

Isabel. Premaritally, Isabel and her husband worked out the details of how they would accommodate children into their professional lives. The "deal" went as follows:
Jay and I decided we would have kids eventually and we thought it would be great if we could both work part-time and then both stay home with the kids. The plan was that I would finish my dissertation while I was pregnant and be done before he was born. Then we would both work part-time.

Much to Isabel’s dismay, things have not worked out as they had planned. Firstly, she did not complete her dissertation before her son’s birth. She says:

It didn’t work out that way, so here I am trying to finish up my dissertation between diapers and play dates and laundry...I’m sure you can relate. My husband got a good job and I’m at home full time.

Secondly, Isabel’s husband is no longer agreeable to working part-time and sharing their son’s childcare responsibilities. Thus, Isabel has been forced to rework the sequence to accommodate these changes. Currently, Isabel plans to finish her dissertation while at home with her son. Then she intends to find a part-time job in her field. This may or may not work out within the parameters of “deal” she made with her husband; daycare may soon become another of Isabel’s strategies.

Lynn. Lynn’s sequencing plan is very clearly illustrated in this quote:

I’ll be done with residency in a couple years. First, I’m just going to find a job doing whatever to get some experience. And, my husband will do his residency because he’s working now. And I want to work maybe 2/3 time when I’m done with my residency and then after that when he’s done with his residency,
then I’ll really figure out what I want. If we have enough money I will stay home all of the time but only for a few years while they are really little. As soon as they hit school, I’ll go out and work.

Like Katherine, Lynn does not possess much information on what re-entry into medicine will be like for her:

Is it possible to do that in my field—to stop out for a few years and then go back? I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know if there are any rules. You’d have to keep up with continuing medical education credits. It would be a lot harder to find a job knowing that you took off that time. I suppose it’s feasible.

Nan. Nan’s sequence does not involve taking time off from her job as a doctor outside of maternity leave. She plans to manage both of her roles of mother and doctor, relying heavily upon childcare, until she retires. Nan is the only woman who specifically includes leisure time in her sequencing; she puts it last:

I intend to retire in fifteen years. My entire life is geared toward that. If I can live fifteen more years (laughs) and bank enough. I am out the door. And then what I call my “real life” will start. Things that I’ve always been wanting to do and never had time to do since I got on the treadmill I will finally get a chance to do.

(2) **Part-Time Employment**

Part-time outside employment is another strategy used to fulfill the nurturing and achieving aspects of the self. Gladys is very satisfied with her part-time participation in the workforce:
I love this stuff right now because it’s part time. If it was full time I’m sure that I wouldn’t want to do it...at least now while my kids are small. This way I don’t have to give up one for the other one. So, it depends on how you make your decisions and what fits you at that moment. For me, it fits right now to be a part-time career woman and a full-time mommy.

Angela also enjoys the benefits of part-time work as a psychologist. In fact, she would like to work much more part time. She refers to what she thinks would be the perfect situation:

I have a friend that works one day a week, and that sounds so perfect. You’re not out of the work force completely, but you get to spend a lot of time with your kids. I just think that would be perfect.

Other women expressed intentions of pursuing part time employment in the future:

I will try to get a part-time job in the medical field. The most important thing, even if I can’t go into a residency now, is being able to be in the medical field with those kinds of people and that environment. I would feel a little better than I do now. (Maria)

Is working part-time as a physician realistic? I’ll make it realistic. I’ll just make less money. I would take a job that I didn’t want as much so that I could work part-time. I mean, we plan on having more kids. (Lynn)

I already have told my partners that I want to cut down to part-time. We’ve had two major meetings about it. Knock down drag out meetings. The bottom line is that everybody is excited about me going part time but they just don’t want it now, because we don’t have enough people. It’s basically the same situation that’s existed for the last year and a half since I formally put in my request. And by part time I’m not
talking about 50%. I’m talking about one day off a week with full call. I think that there is just way too much hostility in our practice and people are already on too much of the edge for me to cut down right now. (Nan)

Teresa recalls the time when she worked part time. She thought this was a “perfect” situation for her:

It was more emotional than anything else. I felt like I was doing something for myself. You know, I was getting out once a week. The kids were well taken-care of because they were with my mom and so that was it. I mean, I felt like I was a better mom when I got home. That was actually perfect for me. I felt like it was a good balance.

(3) Getting Support

Clearly, whether or not these women receive support from relationships and the community affects their overall satisfaction and happiness.

From Spouses. Support from spouses emerged as a critical contingency of satisfaction and happiness. Spousal support can make or break a woman’s abilities to fulfill her achieving and nurturing roles. Support includes sharing household and childcare responsibilities and receiving encouragement.

Household and childcare responsibilities can easily be a full-time role for one person. For women who work outside the home, equitable division of duties is almost a
necessity. Lynn and Gladys point to their spouse's participation in household maintenance as critical to their success as dual-role women:

We have different responsibilities in the house. I like cooking so that's one of my responsibilities. I used to control everything but now I realize that I can't do everything. So, he takes care of things like finances and bills. It kind of just worked out that way. It's almost like stereotypical, but it's what we like to do and it works out so we don't worry about it. (Lynn)

We take turns. Pretty much all of my classes were at night, so my husband was there when I wasn't. If I have classes in the morning he'll stay with the kids. If he has classes I stay with the kids. You know, we manage. And sometimes we don't have classes every day so with our assistantship being the same, I was with the kids in the morning for example and he was in the morning. (Gladys)

Both the at-home mothers and the women working outside the home also rely upon their spouses for emotional support. This, too, is important in their functioning, happiness, and satisfaction. Choice is very important to Teresa. She feels that because her husband supported her no matter what, going to work or staying home, she had the choice to do what was best. He really supported me either way. Had I wanted to find another babysitter or stay home. It didn't bother him either way. Maria is grateful for the support of her husband when she thought she would not be able to complete her medical degree. She says:
I had all of that support from my husband. We did have those moments where we couldn't find anybody that could take over her care. So I said I would stop school but my husband said, "No, no. You can't stop. You can't stop." He wanted me to graduate so bad as well. Even though at the very beginning of the pregnancy he said it wouldn't matter if I quit. But right when I got to the point that I only had eight months to go, so he's like, "No, you won't stop. If I have to stop the job, I'll stop."

Isabel, despite recent disagreements with her husband about part-time work, notes that her husband supports her efforts to complete her dissertation.

But he is really supportive of my career. He encourages me to get out of the house to work on my dissertation. Usually I'm too tired but it's nice that he offers.

Gladys attributes her contentment with her dual-role life partly to her husband. He understands her desire to combine family and career, and thus, supports her in her efforts:

I have support from my husband who thinks the same. He's a father, he's a worker. He wants both in his life too. So we said, O.K., we can do it. As long as we both agree on some of the consequences of our decisions, go for it. So if you want both, you can do both. Just don't give up one for the other. I don't think you need to compromise. NO.

From parents and family. Second to spouses, the women I spoke with consistently mentioned family support as related to their happiness. For Lynn, it's just knowing that family is close by:

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It helps to have family around. We don’t have any support or any help and it would be really, really nice if we did. Just to know that...I mean we have some friends if something happened. But...that’s the biggest thing.

For Gladys, whose parents live in Peru, it’s the unconditional support regarding the decisions she makes for herself and her family that is so important:

My parents. Mommy and poppy have always been very supportive of everything, of my decisions. Whenever I make a decision for myself they were always there. I can talk with them about all of my feelings and ideas and everything.

Madhu thanks her parents for the encouragement they gave her and her husband that they could both have careers and a family:

I think family support is very important whether it is between you and your husband or you and your parents. I think that all that came to us from our parents, the support they gave us that we could do it.

Maria cites more concrete examples of familial support. First, she recalls a cousin’s help in caring for her daughter while she was at work. At one instance, when Maria’s daughter had run out of expressed breast milk, Maria’s cousin put the baby to her own breast:

I had a cousin that had a baby four months before me. So she told me to bring her over and she would watch my baby while she watched her baby. One time I was too late and my daughter was starving. She had finished her bottles and everything. She actually breastfed her. It was great. I felt...wow...I’m lucky to have this person
Maria is also happy to report that her mother-in-law will be moving close by. She will rely upon her for childcare and that will be a big help. Maria plans to take her daughter to her grandmother's house while she studies for boards.

From friends. Support from friends was mentioned by only a few women as critical to their ability to manage dual roles. For Maria, friendship came from the structured environment of a support group for spouses of resident physicians. It was here that she found a few other at-home mothers to commiserate with. She gives credit to these women for alleviating her depression state:

I felt like I was really going into a depression state. I was like, I need to talk to someone. I started going to a support group. I started talking to other spouses about what they were doing and I found that many of them were in my situation. I got to clear out my mind of what was going on.

Secondly, Gladys and her husband looked to their friends to help out with daycare in their earliest parenting years. She states: And then if we couldn't manage schedules to take care of the kids, we got good friends that could help us out. Thus, it was in part through the benefits of friendship that Gladys and her husband were able to develop their careers simultaneously. Finally, Nan found a few
colleagues to help her through her roughest time with an ill newborn and a very stressful residency. They were not able to change her situation, but would listen with a sympathetic ear:

I had one strong female sort of grandmother-type role model. She went to Duke University at a time when no women had ever gone there. They didn’t even have locker rooms for female physicians so she had to change in patient rooms and sleep on radiology tables at night because there was no call room for her. Even though she had opted to stay out of medicine during her childrearing years but she understood what children were all about and she had made a huge commitment for her kids. So, she wasn’t a shoulder to lean on but she was at least an ear that was sympathetic. And that sort of helped. And there was a woman who was three years ahead of me and she was already an attending physician. Her husband was also a physician. She hadn’t had any children yet, but she was also a sympathetic ear.

From employers. Only two women, notably the two working mothers who expressed the least amount of conflict, found their employers to be supportive in their motherhood endeavors. Angela, for example, recalls how her medical practice reacted when she wanted to work part-time after the birth of her daughter. She says: The people I work with are wonderful. I had no problems when I wanted to go part-time. They told me to do whatever made me happy.

Gladys also recalls that both hers and her husbands employer (they were one in the same) were very understanding when Gladys experienced a very difficult
first pregnancy. *If I wasn’t feeling well, I just didn’t come. I could make up the hours whenever, so that was really good.* Her supervisor was also very flexible to accommodate her family needs after his birth.

Nan’s experience was not like Angela’s or Gladys’. In fact, Nan experienced much pressure from her residency director not to have children. As you may recall, he told her: *Doctor, you are well on your way to chief resident as long as you continue using birth control.* As an attending physician she feels that her role of motherhood is seen as a burden to the rest of her practice. Recently, while she was on maternity she reportedly ran meetings from home, took phone calls, and attended her weekly departmental meetings. She did this because: *I wanted to maintain a high enough profile while I was on maternity leave so that I would be taken seriously when I got back.*

(4) Ancillary Services

Another very important way the working mothers manage their dual roles is by taking advantage of what Nan refers to as “ancillary services”. These services include childcare and housekeeping services. All of the working mothers utilize some sort of daycare. Three of the working mothers utilize housekeepers: Nan, Madhu, and Lynn.
Using Childcare. Although many of the working mothers express some guilt about the amount of time their children spend with another caregiver, childcare services do allow them to pursue their achievement goals. Gladys, Lynn, and Madhu expressed some reservations about daycare, but see it as the only alternative at this time. Gladys' children go to a university-run daycare in the afternoons while she and her husband work. Lynn's baby goes to a babysitter while she and her husband work. She drops the baby off at 6:30 a.m. and picks her up between five and six in the evening. Madhu used a daycare with her first son, and has already hired a nanny for her new baby in anticipation of her return to work.

Angela and Nan also use daycare services for their children. These two women express the benefits of the services to not just themselves, but their children:

As she gets older and as I see how much she really enjoys daycare. They are absolutely wonderful. I drop her off and pick her up all of the days that she is there. When I drop her off she's happy to be there and is interested in playing with them. She's had the same teacher now for over a year and I really like her. And I can tell that she really likes my daughter. It just makes me feel a lot better. I'm so relieved that she's happy and well taken care of. (Angela)

Oh God, I love daycare. I think daycare has given my son social skills that he needs. He's learned how to wait in line. He's learned how to work with groups of
kids. He’s learned how to suck up to adults to get what he wants. He’s learned how to do that in a positive fashion. He’s learned how to be positively persistent to get what he wants and needs out of his environment. And I think a lot of it has to do with the daycare setting. I feel very confident that there is no kind of abuse going on there. There are too many eyes that won’t tolerate that. The facility that our children have spent most of their time in has been very nicely structured and physically they are nice places to be. I think it’s been terrific for them. (Nan)

Housekeeping. Lynn, with a certain degree of guilt, uses housekeeping services to maintain her home on occasion. Both Nan and Madhu have a housekeeper come on a weekly basis to clean their homes. In addition to these services, Nan is looking to hire someone to cook regular meals for her family.

(5) Staying Connected to Outside World

For the at-home mothers, staying connected with their achieving selves is critical to their current happiness and satisfaction. It seems that if they continue to nurture that part, either internally or through activities, they are much happier in their temporary roles of full-time mother. They know that in a matter of time, they will be able to fulfill their achieving role as well. Maria, for example, has restarted her preparation for medical board exam:
I made a schedule and sat down and got out my books. I think that I’m doing my self study. I’ve almost read everything at this moment. And I still have two more subjects to go and I picked my day for the exam this coming month.

This activity helps Maria feel that she is gradually moving toward her goal to become a practicing physician.

Katherine says: I don’t have to work to keep up with my field. She finds ways to stay connected to the nutritional field from her home, mostly through the news and the internet. She says that by doing this, she fulfills her outside interests and skills while staying home with her children:

The reason I went back to school and I got my Ph.D. was that I was interested in this area and I wanted to study it and learn more about it. I can still do that. I can do my own research. My point is, I could go out and get paid to do it or I can do it on my own and still be home with my kids.

And finally, Isabel talks about seeking an occasional “career fix” to stay connected with the achieving part of her self. She says:

When I get really burned out or frustrated with being home, I usually call up my dissertation advisor and set up an appointment with her. It’s like my career fix and it never fails to make me feel better. After talking with her, I feel jazzed about my dissertation again. I know that someone else is pulling for me. Most of all, I don’t feel like that part of me is just withering away.
Summary

The focus of this chapter was the presentation of the findings of this inquiry in which data were collected through interviews with women regarding the emergence of their roles as mother and achiever, the construction and nature of these involvements, the tension between these roles, and the efforts to align parts of themselves to satisfy nurturing and achieving aspects of the self. I have endeavored to provide readers with adequate thick description to determine the transferability of these results to other settings and to facilitate a complex understanding of women's identity development.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the construction and nature of nurturing and achievement roles of ten high-achieving mothers. The inquiry was guided by the following research questions: How were the achieving and nurturing roles developed and constructed? How do high-achieving mothers live out their roles? How does the nature of roles impact a woman’s life satisfaction, identity, and self-esteem? What is the significance of gender in these women’s lives?

In this chapter, I will discuss the outcomes of the study, particularly as they relate to the research questions. Through a dialogue between the data and the behavioral, psychosocial, and cognitive-structural theories that structured the literature review, I will propose some answers. This is followed by implications of this study for
Discussion of Results in Relation to Research Questions

1) **How were the achieving and nurturing roles developed and constructed?** This question asks: how did these ten women become high-achievers? How did they become mothers? The behavioral, psychosocial, and cognitive-developmental theories, in combination, illuminate this very complex process. "Emergence" is discussed in Chapter 4 as a process of role construction that involves internal and external influences. These same influences can be examined in dialogue with the three theoretical perspectives.

**Behavioral theories**

Behavioral theories focus mainly upon how social, cultural, political and economic factors influence women's development. They provide the external context within which these ten women's identity development occurs. Broadly, the orientation of the behavioral approach is to how environmental, or external, factors affect their self-perceptions. The focus, here is on how these factors influenced these women to seek advanced education and/or
choose to enter the workforce and in what capacity. Behavioral theories also help to explain why these women became mothers.

**Motherhood.** As reviewed in Chapter 2, there exist cultural expectations that all heterosexual women will eventually become mothers. Huffman (1989) states that society tells us that ultimate fulfillment as a woman is achieved by becoming a mother. Motherhood has thus developed semi-sacred connotations and is seen as the most important function of a woman. These factors tacitly seem to have influenced the women of this study to choose motherhood as one of their life roles.

Furthermore, this "motherhood mystique" advises a woman that to be a good mother, she must enjoy all aspects of the role. Also, we are taught to believe that a woman's intense, exclusive devotion to motherhood is good for her children. These societal messages may be myths, but they have nonetheless encouraged some of the women of this study to interrupt their careers for full-time motherhood. These messages also promote tension, mostly in the form of guilt, for the women who have not chosen to stay at home with their children full-time.
Career. One career development phenomenon outlined in Chapter 2 is that of underutilization of abilities. Behavioral theory suggests that women's intellectual abilities tend not to be reflected in their career choices. At first glance, it may seem that some of the participants are, indeed, underutilizing their talents in their chosen careers. Katherine, for example, seems to have downscaled her career aspirations from a physician to a nutritionist in an attempt to accommodate future family responsibilities. Lynn admits that she chose her medical specialty based upon her commitment to her future family. This specialty is not as rigorous or esteemed as some others; not surprisingly, it is also female-dominated. Teresa, Maria, and Isabel have all interrupted their careers to raise children.

There are, however, some assumptions that make judgments about "underutilization" a bit troubling. The first assumption is obviously about how we define "success". Is a physician really more successful than a nutritionist? Is raising healthy, well-adjusted children not an "achievement"? Secondly, this evaluation assumes that because some of these women's lives are not characterized by notable and linear achievement, that they
have somehow failed to use their talents appropriately. This does not recognize those who have obtained advanced degrees out of a love for the intellectual life and a desire for self-fulfillment, not to "get a job". It also fails to recognize that some of these women may be on more of a long-term track that does not exhibit an immediate level of outward achievement. The third assumption is that childrearing does not "utilize" the same talents and abilities that are developed within a graduate or professional school atmosphere. Betz (1993) does not even consider childrearing a legitimate career because it is unpaid, has no opportunities for advancement, and requires no training. If childrearing is not considered a legitimate career, it surely will not be seen as a legitimate way to utilize one's talents. Regardless, some of these women have changed, down-scaled, or interrupted their outside career achievements in a way that seems to be characteristically female.

Influences unique to women's career development, defined by Betz (1993) as barriers and facilitators, help us to understand the life choices and role development of the women of this study. Three barriers will be outlined and compared with the data:
1) **Gender-role and occupational stereotyping:** This social influence is seen as a barrier to women's career development. It occurs when messages from society deem certain occupations or roles as more appropriate for women. The women of this study have all likely heard these messages, but only a few made note of them in our interview. Lynn, for example, was told as a young adult that she had *no place going into medicine and taking a spot away from someone who is going to work full time*. Lynn also learned that some specialties are more appropriate for women in light of their family responsibilities. Other examples of gender-role stereotyping will be examined in Question 4.

2) **Gender bias in education:** This barrier is seen to have negative affects on women's career aspirations, expectations and attitudes. What is unique about the women in the study is that despite the hostile environment for women in higher education, they have achieved the highest academic credentials. At first glance, it may appear that women with Ph.D.s or M.D.s have somehow transcended sexism in education. Despite their achievements, however, it should not be assumed that their experiences of overt and
subtle forms of discrimination will not affect their future choices, for

At a very basic level, early schooling serves as a major source of learning and socialization and conveys values regarding work and career that are influential throughout one’s life. More specifically, the nature and level of obtained education are importantly related to subsequent career achievements and to adult socioeconomic status and lifestyle (Betz, 1993, p. 656).

One of the most striking examples of gender bias in education was Nan’s experience with overt sexism in her residency training. The director of the program told her that she could expect a position as chief resident as long as she would keep using birth control. This statement suggests that women are suited for leadership roles in medical education only if they do not have children. It also raises questions about the structure of medical education, which has the reputation of being incompatible with family and social lives. How can this educational environment be restructured to fit the development of the whole person, which for some, may include parenting?

3) Career-family conflict: Rand and Miller (1972) suggest that a “cultural imperative” to combine marriage and career has replaced the centrality of marital and motherhood roles in women’s lives. Other research suggests that ninety percent of women who pursue careers still
expect to have two or more children (Russo & Denmark, 1984). All of the women in this study assumed from early on that they would combine career and family, but "combining" turned out to have different meanings for all of the women. For some, it is in the most literal sense of combining career and motherhood simultaneously. For others, it resembles more of a sequenced path of alternating career and family activities throughout adulthood.

Catalyst (1987) suggests that even though most women plan to combine career and family, they are unprepared for the reality of doing so. This appears to have been the case for Nzingha:

When I was sixteen, I was like, I want to be married by the time I’m 24-25, I want to have my first child by the time I’m 25. I knew at that time that I was going to be a doctor somehow, either an M.D. or Ph.D. There was never any conflict in my head. I was like I’m going to get married, I’m going to have a kid, I’m going to have my Ph.D., I’m going to be working, I’m going to be doing all of this stuff and making crazy money. I was always like, well, I guess until the kids get older I’ll just work until three. Or I’ll have a husband who will make enough money that I can stay home and still work from home. And when they go to school I’ll go back to work and work until like three so I can be home when they get off school. I had the WHOLE THING just laid out, but the funny thing was is that the concept of having children did not interrupt what I thought I could do in terms of career trajectory. It didn’t have any impact on it AT ALL, you know?
Even though Nzingha’s pregnancy was also unplanned and unwelcome, she does not recall reassessing her career goals after discovering her pregnancy. She said:

I didn’t really change my goals after I found out I was pregnant. They stayed the same. I still was of the opinion that I could do this. I can be mommy, I can finish this doctorate, and she doesn’t have to feel slighted at all. When I was pregnant, I firmly believed that.

Later, Nzingha was shocked and dismayed by her inability to maintain her motherhood and professional roles simultaneously to her satisfaction.

Similarly, Madhu does not recall seeing a potential conflict between her career and her family goals. She says:

Actually, I never really thought about how family would fit into my career. At that time it was never like this. When you are building your career, the most important thing is that you should do something in which you really want to do. I don’t think it was ever an issue that because of your career you could not have a family.

Unlike Nzingha, Madhu has been able to accommodate both her family and career goals and responsibilities with minimal conflict.

Most of the women in this study spoke of early assumptions of conflicting parts of their personalities: the nurturer and achiever. Thus, many decisions were made based upon the prediction that their family goals and
career goals would be at odds later in life. Katherine, for example, saw the potential for tension between her desires to become a doctor and her desires to be a mother at the young age of 18. She states:

I went to college with the expectation to go to medical school. And then late in my college life I decided that I did not want to be a physician because I also wanted a family and decided that being a doctor was not a good fit with that. I didn’t want the time commitment knowing later on that I wanted a family. So even in college when I was trying to decide what I wanted to do, it was do I want to be a doctor or do I want to have a family?

Therefore, Katherine changed her career goal of becoming a physician to becoming a nutritionist because being a nutritionist is more normal than being a doctor. That’s kind of where I was making that choice.

Lynn chose her medical specialty based upon an anticipated conflict between being a physician and being a mother. She said that she was willing to choose a specialty that I didn’t want as much so that I could work part-time in the future. I planned on having kids. Here is how her selection process went:

At first I really wanted to be a sports doc, but knew that I wouldn’t want to travel with the team once I had kids. Then, I really wanted to do obstetrics because I loved delivering babies. But the hours are horrible. But the big thing was I wanted to be able to balance my career and what I want for my family. And
I said I’m not going to choose a specialty that won’t allow me to do that the way I want to do it. So I picked a more flexible specialty.

For Maria motherhood was unwelcome in light of her assumptions of conflict between motherhood and medicine. She states:

When I found out I was pregnant, I was like oh no I’m pregnant. My husband was so happy and said it was a blessing. But I cried and told him I want to finish my career. He told me not to worry if I had to stop. But I said I didn’t want to stop. Just because it had taken me a long time to get there because of all of the problems we had in our country and all of that. And I was feeling that I needed to graduate. I had everything planned already.

Only a few stated that this perceived conflict affected the development of their role as mother. Nan delayed marriage and childbearing and was never really excited about being a mom. Furthermore, she states that this was because she knew that it was going to be really really hard to do the professional thing and be a mom. Angela also delayed motherhood until she felt that she had a secure enough position in her practice that she could decrease her workload to part-time.

As will be discussed in Question 3, although role conflict and overload are possible, they may be exaggerated as potential outcomes. Positive effects of combining roles have been shown by several studies. In fact, some studies
suggest that women are actually happier and more satisfied if they combine career and family (Baruch, Barnett, & Rivers, 1983). On the contrary, there is some evidence of conflict between the two roles. As was reviewed in Chapter 2, several studies indicate that having a family inhibits a woman's career success (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987); this suggests an incompatibility between the two roles. Furthermore, there are some very real experiences of conflict expressed by the working mothers of this study (Nan, Nzingha, Gladys, Lynn, Angela). They include: no time for self, separation from child, no time for child, use of childcare, relationship with spouse, housework, falling behind in career, money, and not fulfilling gender expectations. These sources of tension are manifested in these women in guilt, anger, and depression. It should be noted, however, that the at-home women experienced similar sources of tensions. Furthermore, some of the women who are combining career with family reported a great deal of satisfaction (i.e., Lynn, Gladys, Angela).
The two career facilitators described by Betz (1993) can also be used to understand the women of this study:

1) **Family background:** According to the behavioral literature on women's career development, maternal education, employment, and gender-role ideology are very powerful predictors in their daughters' education and employment. This trend can be seen in the women in this study as well. The at-home mothers (Teresa, Katherine, Maria, and Isabel) all grew up with mothers who were at home themselves. Of the women who are working outside the home, Angela's, Nan's, and Madhu's mothers all had professional degrees and combined motherhood with careers outside the home. Unfortunately, I did not ascertain the educational and work histories of Gladys' and Nzingha's mothers. Nonetheless, these results suggest that there may indeed be a strong connection between female role models, especially mothers, and women's life choices. Modeling what women do when their children are born appears to have an impact on these women's life choices. Thus, the life choices of the women in this study may also affect their own daughters' future life choices and roles.
2) **Education**: The one characteristic that unites these ten women is that they are very highly educated. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the most consistent predictor of working outside the home, regardless of family status, is education. In this sample, only two women work outside the home full-time, while three women work part-time. Five women, all with extensive education and training, are at home full-time. This contradicts the literature and encourages us to look more closely and the choices these women have made and why they have made them. Two factors should be kept in mind: Firstly, the reasons these women stay home are complex, numerous and varied. Secondly, all of these at-home mothers plan to resume their careers in the future.

**Summary.** The development of motherhood and achievement roles can be seen as partly a response to societal factors and pressures. Although the career development of highly-educated women may look very different from that of men, we should be careful not to evaluate their success in terms of only one measure: immediate and concrete career achievements. To do so could be detrimental to women's development.
Also, because of assumptions of conflict, many women see their career and family goals in terms of a trade-off. This pattern is consistent with the findings of a study conducted by DiBenedetto and Tittle (1990). What emerged from a dialogue between the literature and the data is an unclear distinction between perceived/assumed conflict and real conflict with respect to career and family roles. It is troublesome to find that some women made decisions about their lives based upon an anticipated conflict between their careers and the families that they did not yet have; yet, we see that there are some very real tensions experienced by women who combine both roles simultaneously. To not anticipate conflict and work to accommodate it in one’s life plan could result in severe conflict later in life, as it did for Nzingha. To change or downscale one’s career aspirations, or to choose something that is flexible but does not necessarily fit ones skills or interests, is problematic as well. This is a difficult situation that is unique to women’s development. It goes beyond the scope of this study to address this problem, but could perhaps be the focus of future research.

Finally, although behavioral theories help us to understand how development takes place within a context,
they do not fully appreciate human agency and the participants’ ability to actively participate in their own experiences. Peck (1986) states that “a woman is self-reflective, capable of understanding her own behavior, and able to communicate her sense of self to another” (p. 277). Thus, she is not just a product of random events or the push and pull of the environment.

**Psychosocial Theories**

Psychosocial theories help us to better understand the more reflective side of the women in this study. Josselson’s, Sheehy’s, and Levinson’s theories, when integrated, provide a very useful framework for understanding women’s development. They answer the question of how these women came to be mothers and achievers through age-related stages. These stages examine how they resolve important issues about how to define themselves and their relationships with others, as well as what to do with their lives.

Psychosocial theory describes a search for identity that occurs between adolescence and early adulthood, named by Sheehy as *Pulling Up Roots* and by Levinson as *Early Adult Transition*. This can be a period of *moratorium* whereby a young woman separates from her parents and
explores possibilities in the adult world of relationships and careers. Commitments that come out of this exploration could be *foreclosed*, by Josselson’s (1987, 1996) definition, because of lack of cognitive complexity. Three women in this study say that they always knew that they would become physicians or scholars (Nan, Lynn, and Nzingha). Katherine and Nzingha stated that they knew that they would marry and have children; for Nzingha, this desire was out of a need for security. An absence of subsequent exploration could make these decisions *foreclosed*. All of the women, as adolescents and young adults, explored their options with regard to career and/or relationships to some degree.

The next stage of development is Sheehy’s *Trying Twenties* or Levinson’s *Entry Life Structure for Early Adulthood*. This is a time to deal with the consequences of *foreclosed* or *achieved* decisions of the previous stage through exploration, or *moratorium*. For all of the participants in this study, preliminary decisions or commitments that they made during this period included marriage and family and higher education. Career and family timetables, which are external messages about when things “should” happen, influenced most of them. The
significant decision of having a child came during this stage for Isabel, Nan, and Angela. For example, Isabel felt that she was under a time pressure to have her first child before the age of 30. Therefore, she made decisions to do so during this stage of her development. Similarly, Nan describes her decision to have her first child as not one out of desire, but a realization of that "mortality thing" and her ticking "biological clock". Angela also said that she decided to have her first child because she finally felt settled in her career, but also because she was getting as old as the hills as far as childbearing is concerned. Nzingha also had a timetable in mind for herself when she stated, I want to be married by the time I’m 24-25 and I want to have my first child by the time I’m 25. Nzingha did follow this timetable to the year; now, at age 26, she is currently in this stage of upheaval. This is indeed a "trying" time for her as she deals with the decisions she made in the previous stage which were based upon external influences and probably foreclosed—particularly her decisions to marry and have a child.

Several of the women in this study are chronologically in Sheehy’s Catch-30 and Levinson’s Age Thirty Transition (Teresa, Katherine, Maria, Gladys, Lynn, Isabel). It seems,
however, that Teresa, Maria, Lynn, Isabel, and Nan most closely fit the characteristics. This stage involves another moratorium state, and if at the appropriate cognitive level (more likely now than in the transition from adolescence) will result in an achieved identity or a revised achieved identity for those who were already achieved. These women are all in the process of engagement in an assessment of previous choices whereby commitments are altered or deepened. Teresa, Maria, and Isabel, who previously emphasized family and caregiving roles, are in the process of reassessing their life roles and career goals. Change for Isabel make take the form of part-time work in addition to her caregiving role. For Maria, this reassessment of full-time motherhood may result in renewed strivings for a residency position. Teresa is still at the heart of this crisis, and it is difficult to say what the result will be. Career women, like Lynn and Nan, are reassessing their accomplishments and goals and may undergo some changes in those areas. For Nan, this is likely to be part-time work instead of full-time work as a physician so that she can have more time for her children and herself.
For Lynn, this reassessment resulted in the birth of her first child. Katherine and Gladys appear to be in the next stage of development despite their young age.

Sheehy’s *Rooting and Extending*, Levinson’s *Culminating life structure*, and Josselson’s *achieved identity* are all described as a time of peace and settling down. In the most mature patterns, decisions and commitments in relationships and careers have been made, not according to external pressures and stereotypes, but based upon internal wishes, needs, and desires. It appears that it is at this time that many have the cognitive ability to be self-reflective and also to balance multiple demands and desires. It seems as if Katherine, Lynn, Gladys, Angela and Madhu are all currently in this stage, whereby they are able to balance their multiple demands and desires though their own forms of sequencing. Although Nan’s chronological age falls within this time period, she does not appear to be in a process of settling down. Instead, she seems to be experiencing a crisis that resembles the *Catch-30/Age 30 Transition* where she is renegotiating conflicting aspects of her self due to significant life events.
Summary. In essence, these psychosocial theories are helpful in understanding the issues these ten women face at various points in their lives. There are some age-related milestones that are both cultural and biological (i.e. perceived risks involved in having child later in life). If you look at these demands from a cognitive development perspective, however, you see that a woman may or may not have the cognitive complexity to deal with these milestones when they are expected to occur. In other words, society has certain expectations that are age-determined, but our cognitive development does not guarantee that we will successfully be able to deal with those demands when they arise. The psychosocial literature does not address this issue; cognitive-structural theories do.

Cognitive-Structural Theories

Cognitive theories add yet another dimension to our understanding of women’s role development. These theories describe unique aspects of cognitive complexity, epistemology, and responsibility. Gilligan and Belenky describe how we make meaning of the content of our lives in slightly different ways. They will be reviewed briefly and then used to examine how the women of this study make meaning of their roles.
Belenky et al. (1986) focus on the development of "voice" and a more sophisticated epistemology. Belenky et al. (1986) also provide an interesting framework for understanding the unique process these women engage in when they develop their life roles. Are meanings and choices made internally or externally? Whose ideas are women collecting when making decisions about their lives? Parents? Spouses? Role models? Media? An inner voice? A combination of internal and external sources? What is the status of these ideas?

Gilligan's (1982) theory may also be used to understand women's life choices and identity development. Choices may reflect a stage of development as defined by Gilligan and represent how a woman has chosen to care for self, care for others, or integrate needs for personal affirmation and caring for others. Gilligan also helps us to understand that one choice can have multiple underlying meanings. The focus is not so much the actual behavior, but the meaning behind that behavior. Hence, we can better understand the meaning of the participants' behavior as well as the content of the decision itself. Gilligan (1982) approaches identity development for many women in terms of care and responsibility on which the emphasis shifts.
throughout development. Who we are and how we define ourselves can be seen as a combination of all of these factors. As one develops, according to the cognitive-structural theories, one knows in more sophisticated ways; these new ways of perceiving and making meaning lead to new self-perceptions and self-definitions (Taylor, 1999).

Stage-by-stage comparisons of these cognitive-developmental theories are again interesting and enlightening. I hesitate to prescribe a level of cognitive ability to any of the participants. This is not the goal of this study, nor is it an area in which I have received special training. Instead, I will use some concepts offered by Belenky and Gilligan to understand how the women of this study make meaning of their roles and how that impacts their development.

I will begin with Belenky’s Subjective Knowledge stage. At this time, for many the truth is found within oneself only. There is a sense of self-preservation of one’s private, internal, reality that is not to be threatened by others. The main goal is to relativize environmental messages and stay true to one’s own experience of reality.
This time may be most obvious in adolescence, but it could also take place in early adulthood. Nzingha seems to have made some early choices or plans, especially those involving marriage and motherhood, based upon her needs for self preservation. As you may recall, she says:

I was scared of finishing this process and being alone a single Black woman with a Ph.D. whose chances of getting married drop—they plummet. Most of the Black women I know are single, unless they got married before they started. And that was, to be totally honest, that was the biggest thing in my head. I don’t want to finish this and not have anyone to share it with. It was tear.

Next, in Gilligan’s level two the main issue is connection to others—almost to an exaggerated degree. Instead of preserving oneself, women in these stages preserve the feelings and needs of others. The balance between autonomy and connection is not yet achieved in these stages. Gilligan’s Level Two: Goodness to self-sacrifice involves a movement from selfishness to a responsibility to others at all costs. A woman at this stage desires social acceptance. Belenky’s Received knowledge reflects a similar orientation to the outside, but focuses less on responsibility and more on connecting with others to receive their knowledge (the only...
knowledge that’s available). One’s own thoughts and ideas are discounted, and a woman no longer looks into her private self for knowledge. Maria, Teresa, and Isabel seem to fit the characteristics of this stage in that they have not yet achieved a balance between autonomy and connection, or family and career roles. Instead, they have postponed their careers to care for others. They are less committed to caring for themselves and pursuing goals separate from their families. In fact, each of them directly points to this lack of balance, or “completeness”, as one of their major life stressors. Maria and Teresa seem to be quite affected by the received knowledge of gender expectations, especially the one that deems women to be better childcare providers than men. And although Isabel deems this idea a crock of shit, she too finds herself drawn to living up to gender expectations.

Thirdly, similarities can be found between Belenky’s Procedural Knowledge and Gilligan’s From Goodness to Truth. These stages involve another shift toward autonomy, as well as a maintenance of some connectedness. There is more of a tendency toward internal procedures (like sequencing) and a personal ideology. In Belenky’s Procedural Knowledge, there is also more of a balance between separateness and
connection. One looks for objective standards and procedures to work it out, but also recognizes that these standards can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Gilligan's second transition, From Goodness to Truth, most closely fits with the other theories. In this transition, women begin to make decisions based upon care of self, as well as care of others. Nan and Nzingha seem to be in a crisis at this time. Their most recent decisions were made out of self-sacrifice in a responsibility to others—their jobs and their families—consistent with the previous stage of cognitive development. Recently, however, they are finding that these decisions are costing them their happiness and well-being. Thus, they have started to make choices and changes based upon their own needs while maintaining some connectedness. For Nan, this may mean a shift from full-time to part-time work. For Nzingha, this means leaving her husband so that she can accomplish her personal and professional goals. Both Nan and Nzingha seem to be the most conflicted of all of the participants, indicating that the shift from responsibility to others to a responsibility to self is not an easy one.

Lastly, similarities between Gilligan's third level and Belenky's *Constructed Knowledge* are evident. The
highest, or most complex, stages of Gilligan’s and Belenky’s theories have in common integration and balance. Gilligan’s Level Three is time when the dichotomization of selfishness and responsibility disappears into an ability to keep the competing needs of self and others in mind when making choices. Finally, Belenky’s Constructed Knowledge involves the complex notion of relativity, where ones experiences affect understanding. The women who are most closely approaching balance and integration, although they may not be there yet, are Katherine, Lynn, Gladys, Madhu, and Angela. They are able to balance their competing needs for achievement/self and nurturing/others through their roles. Note, however, that the content of their choices are very different: Gladys is a full-time mother and a part-time counselor. Lynn is a full-time resident physician. Madhu, when she returns from maternity leave, will be a full-time physician. Katherine is a full-time mother who fulfills her achievement needs through plans for a future career and at-home research on nutrition. Although these women are not without conflict or stress, there is a sense of overall peace and contentment not seen in the other women.
Summary. In summary, cognitive-structural theories help us understand the participants' identity development by focusing on how they make meaning of their experiences, or the content, of their lives. These theories are related to both the behavioral and psychosocial perspectives in that they examine how one perceives and resolves the demands of the environment and age-related tasks that are prescribed by both biology and culture. Thus, cognitive-structural theories also help us to further understand decision-making and role-selection of high-achieving mothers in light of cultural and biological imperatives.

2) How do these women live out their roles?

How can present generations of young women face the major life events (education, marriage, births, moves, employment) and negotiate a path that results in a good life? This is the great unspoken quandary for young women in our time (Giele, 1982, p. 121).

The earliest body of research on women's development differentiated women on home-making/traditional versus career/non-traditional orientation (i.e., Hoyt & Kennedy, 1958). Because of the growing number of women combining career and family (Betz, 1993; Green & Russo, 1993; Yogev, 1982), defining women in this dichotomous fashion has decreased in usefulness. Rather, it is necessary to describe the nature of career and family orientation (Betz
& Fitzgerald, 1987) and the interrelationships among career and family roles (Green & Russo, 1993; Osipow, 1983) so the diverse realities of women’s lives can be better understood. The question is no longer whether to do both, but rather how to do both (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Perun & DelVento-Bielby, 1981; Rooney, 1983) in ways consistent with the Self.

The focus here is on women’s life patterns—how they live out their roles. Similarities among the psychosocial theories with regard to the content of the patterns, assuming that they do not exist by mere coincidence, indicate that there must be “something there.” All of the theories mention the same content areas of family and occupation suggesting that these aspects are truly critical to women’s development. According to Josselson (1987, 1996) anchors of family, husband/children, work, and friendship exist in a certain balance with the others and make up our identity. Through these anchors and the identity development process, many women struggle to understand and fulfill their needs for connection and autonomy that make up their identities—then they anchor accordingly. This tension is described by Sheehy (1976) as a life-long push and pull between a “merger” and “seeker”
self. Levinson (1996) describes a similar conflict between internal Traditional and Anti-Traditional figures. Levinson (1996) also offers some other concepts for looking at women’s life patterns. He proposes that two of the most important components in women’s lives are occupation/career and relationships. How these dimensions are experienced make up the components of our life structure. Central components “are those that have the greatest significance for the self and the life. They receive the greatest share of one’s time and energy, and they strongly influence the character of the other components” (p. 23). Most often, marriage/family and occupation are the central components of a person’s life. Peripheral components “involve less investment of self and can be modified with less effect of the fabric of one’s life” (p. 23). Finally, unfilled components are when “a person urgently wants but does not have a meaningful occupation, a marriage, a family; and this absent component plays a major part in the life structure” (p. 23).

The study of women’s life patterns is quite complex. Research on men can proceed more directly in an examination of career choice and development. Women, however, with their competing roles and desires require a more
heterogeneous, complex model of life patterns. Super (1957), even in this early research, noted the centrality of homemaking in a woman’s life and the trend for their increased participation in the workforce. He attempted to define seven life patterns of women. The first pattern is stable homemaking, which characterizes women who marry and have no significant work experience. The conventional career pattern describes women who work outside the home until marriage. The Stable working pattern, was identified for women who work continuously over the lifespan and for whom work is their “career”. The Double-track career pattern characterizes women who combine home and work roles continuously. The Interrupted career pattern is characterized by a return to work later in life. An unstable career pattern describes an irregular and repeated cycle of home versus work involvement. Finally, the multiple trial career pattern, similar to the same male pattern, describes an unstable job history.

Harmon (1967) also categorized women’s career patterns in a way that takes into account multiple roles:

1. no job experience
2. work experience only until marriage or the arrival of first child
Zytowski (1969) developed yet another model of women’s career patterns:

1. **Mild vocational pattern**, characterized by early or late entry and brief and low-degree participation.

2. **Moderate pattern**, characterized by early entry and lengthy span but low-degree participation.

3. **Unusual pattern** characterized by early entry, lengthy or uninterrupted span, and a high degree of participation.

In addition to a developmental ladder, Sheehy (1974) describes a number of life patterns that women evaluate, take on, and revise throughout their development. Some patterns represent the adaptive behavior of sequencing discussed in Chapter 4. I will use Sheehy’s patterns to understand the women of this study. They include:

- **The caregiver**. The caregiver woman describes most women in Sheehy’s experience. A caregiver lives for human relations and satisfies personal ambitions through others. Some of these women work part-time, but usually in
supplemental ways to help along their husbands’ careers, not realizing their full potential for work. Overall, a caregiver lives for her attachments and is dependent on her attachments’ continuing need for her. None of the women in this study fit this pattern at this time. If any of the at-home mothers choose not to pursue their outside careers in the future, they would then fit this pattern. At this time, however, they all plan to resume their careers.

**The nurturer who defers achievement.** According to Sheehy, a woman who chooses this life pattern defers or suppresses the part of her that yearns for a professional place in the world. This part eventually comes into play after her children have reached school age. In this sense, motherhood is perceived as a “phase.” This pattern closely resembles how Teresa, Isabel, Maria, and Katherine describe their lives. Each of these women has interrupted her career to raise children, with every intention of resuming their careers sooner (Maria and Isabel) or later (Teresa and Katherine).

**The achiever who defers nurturing.** Many of these women see marriage and career as an either-or choice. At age 35, many of the women in this pattern experience a crisis when realizing they have little else in life but
work. Angela's life fits this pattern. She obtained her doctorate, completed her fellowship, and became an established psychologist before having children; this was an intentional effort on her part to order her achieving and motherhood roles in a way that would invoke the least amount of conflict. Nzingha, in a slightly different manner, also fits this pattern. Although she already has a child, she plans to relinquish custody so that she can pursue her educational and career goals. Once she has established her career, Nzingha intends to resume her motherhood responsibilities. Again, this is seen as the best way to accommodate both parts of herself.

**Integrators.** Integrators want to "do it all" and do it all at once. Marriage and childbirth do not stop this group from working toward accomplishments, although it might slow them down. Sheehy states that most of these women are determined not to end up as the hard-boiled career woman stereotype, or at the other extreme, a miserable housewife. Despite their efforts, Sheehy asserts that it is rarely possible for a woman to integrate marriage, career, and motherhood in her twenties; it is quite possible to do so at 30, and decidedly possible at 35. Before then, the personal integration necessary simply
has not had a chance to develop. For the women in this study, it seems that in order for the Integrator pattern to work, spouses must be Integrators as well. Nan, Madhu, Gladys, and Lynn most closely fit this life pattern.

None of the women in this study represent the late baby superachievers. These women are very successful in their careers—often achieving high levels of achievement and prestige—and then have children in their late thirties or early forties. Never-married women are a very diverse group that are not represented in this study. Also, the transients, or women whose their lives are marked with prolonged wandering without commitments, were not found in this sample.

It is important to note that none of these patterns differentiate educational level, type of profession, marital status, etc. Even more dramatic was the failure of these patterns to illuminate the complexity of planning, strategizing, and sequencing of different parts of one's education, training, and career with the birth of multiple children that was seen in the women of this sample. Therefore, despite their efforts to encapsulate more of
women’s experiences, they still define women in very simplistic terms. These patterns also fail to give insight into how or why certain paths were chosen by women.

3) How does the nature of these roles impact a woman’s life satisfaction, identity, and self-esteem?

Role Conflict and Overload. During the years when a woman simultaneously works and cares for a young family, her life is physically demanding and involves constant compromise (Hoffnung, 1989). For women who are in professional and managerial jobs, the time pressures are even more intense. Hoffnung (1989) states:

These careers are structured for the lives that men lead; they assume that one is not hampered by home and child-care responsibilities. They require enormous time and energy, as well as the flexibility to leave work late or to come in early. Such demands conflict with the needs of a family. Professional and managerial women report major concern over conflicts between their careers and children. Their concerns include fatigue, emotional depletion, and, in many cases, guilt (p. 169).

This phenomenon, often referred to as role conflict, is an issue whereby professional women are expected to be committed to their work “just like men” and are also required to give priority to their families (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 204). They are expected to fit into existing structures and norms of current practices as well as their assumptions. Research indicates that young women,
even though they are more career-oriented than in the past, do not plan to reduce their responsibilities with children and the home (Betz, 1993). Also, the division of labor within the family consistently relegates the bulk of housework and childcare to the female (Betz, 1993; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; DiBenedetto & Tittle, 1990; Hall & Hall, 1980; Kinnier, Katz & Berry, 1991), regardless of the demands of her career. O’Learly (1977) describes three types of role conflict:

1. **intragrole conflict:** incompatibility of multiple demands within a single role
2. **interrole conflict:** occurs due to the incompatibility of the demands associated with two or more roles

Gray (1980) discusses some sources of psychological pressure leading to interrole conflict:

1. lack of support from significant others
2. incompatibility of career success with feminine role
3. conflict and guilt associated with combining role of worker with that of mother

Role overload is also an issue for many working mothers, where:
Married career women are faced every day with the regrettable fact that Parkinson's Law does not have an inverse; time does not expand to encompass the work available. This 'corollary' has more impact for women that for men, for typically, when women opt for careers, they are adding to their lives a new set of roles and role demands without a commensurate decrease in the old ones (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983, p. 137).

All of the working mothers in this study experience role conflict of varying degrees and kind. Most of the conflict seems to fit within the descriptions of interrole conflict as described by Gray (1980) and role overload—especially for Nan and Nzingha.

**Satisfaction.** According to classical psychoanalysis, women's psychology and the physiology on which it is based suited them for the roles of childbearing and -rearing and the supportive, nurturing functions of wifehood. Employment was seen to be dangerous to a woman's psychological functioning and physical well-being (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987), and even to her reproductive organs. On the contrary, current mental health literature asserts that women, like men, need a variety of major sources of satisfaction in their lives—as stated by Freud—the psychologically well-adjusted human being experiences both 'love and work' effectively (Betz, 1993).

Although role conflict and overload are possible, many researchers find their prevalence to be exaggerated and...
have actually found beneficial effects of multiple roles on women’s physical and mental health (Coleman, Antonucci, & Adelmann, 1987; Gove & Zeiss, 1987; Helson, Elliot, & Leigh, 1990; Pietronmonaco, Manis, & Frohardt-Lane, 1986; Thorts, 1986; Verbrugge, 1987). Baruch and Barnett (1980) state:

> It is almost cliché now for people who work long hours at demanding jobs, aware of what they are missing in terms of time with family, long talks with friends, concerts, and all kinds of opportunities for leisure, to express the sentiment that there is more to life than work. The problem is that life without productive work is terrible. We assume this for men in thinking about their unemployment and retirement, but we do not think about the situation of women in this way (p. 244).

There is strong evidence that homemakers are highly susceptible to psychological distress. It has been suggested that although roles of homemaker and mother are important and often very satisfying, they do not allow most women to fulfill their unique abilities and talents. These, rather, must be fulfilled through career pursuits or volunteer and avocational activities, just as they are in men (Betz, 1993).

More so, there is strong evidence for the positive effects for working outside the home on women’s adjustment. Nye (1974) reviewed the literature and concluded that employed mothers are physically healthier than housewives;
have a more positive self image than do housewives; report as much anxiety about their children, but report fewer related physical symptoms; and participate somewhat less actively in community and recreation but do not perceive this negatively. Bernard (1971, 1972) found that working women have fewer symptoms of psychological distress than do housewives. Shepherd and Barraclough (1980) later found that working women were significantly less likely than non-working women to commit suicide.

*Lifeprints*, a well-known book written by Baruch, Barnett, and Rivers (1983) addresses the question of multiple roles and women's life satisfaction. The authors recognize that women's attitudes and practices about work, marriage, and children seem to be changing rapidly. They argue that no one pattern fits all women; no one "lifeprint" guarantees well-being and no one path leads inevitably to misery. The goal of their work was to provide awareness of the choices women have made, or failed to make, and some of the consequences for their well-being.

Baruch, Barnett, and Rivers (1983) define what contributes to a woman's sense of well-being as "mastery" (What makes a woman feel good about herself as a valued member of society who is in control of her life?) and
"pleasure" (What makes a woman find pleasure and enjoyment in her life?). The answers to these questions are separate and different for individual women. The authors state,

Today, despite the spate of books on women, despite the obsession with adult development and its "crises", the details of women's lives remain unclear. Women wonder how their lives will turn out if they make certain choices. If they do not marry, will they be lonely, pitied spinsters? If they marry but don't have children, will they be haunted by regrets when they are past the childbearing years? If they follow the traditional path of marrying and remaining at home, how will they feel about themselves at midlife? Does a high-powered career lead to 'burnout'? Does the career women-wife-mother combination lead to stress and an early coronary? (p. 3).

An aim of Lifeprints was to discover how and in what ways the major areas of life affect a woman's sense of well-being. The authors look at work, marriage, homemaking, children, parents, finances, sexuality, singleness, divorce, and childlessness. They ask women about turning points, regrets, and crises in their lives, about how they saw the future, and about growing older.

In general, Baruch, Barnett, and Rivers (1983) noted that themes of achievement and work dominated women's discussions. Nearly half of the women surveyed reported that the most rewarding aspect of their life was related to achievement in education and work (Enns, 1991). Women's roles as paid employees were found to be strong sources of
well being for women. Non-paid work roles, especially mothering, were found to be high-stress roles and related to mental health problems. Baruch and Barnett (1987) also found that the more roles a woman occupied, especially if those roles encouraged both “mastery” and “pleasure”, the happier she was in each individual role.

More specifically, Baruch, Barnett, and Rivers (1983) looked at six groups on variables of Mastery and Pleasure. I will focus on the two sample groups related most closely to the study at hand: *married with children and employed* and *married with children at home*. Baruch, Barnett, and Rivers (1983) found the highest scores on both variables to be in women who are *married with children and employed*. Their work and social ties positively impacted their sense of Mastery. These women also enjoyed two distinct sources of Pleasure: love and work. Angela, Gladys, Nzingha, Lynn, Madhu, and Nan represent the married with children and employed group in this study. It seems that Angela, Gladys, Madhu, and Lynn do enjoy the sense of both Mastery and pleasure that comes from their dual-role lives. Nan and Nzingha, however, seem to be under too much stress to enjoy the benefits of dual-role living. The pattern described by Baruch, Barnett, and Rivers (1983) does not
take into account the capacity of which the women are employed—specifically, full- or part-time. This difference may affect the sense of Mastery, as part-time employment typically does not confer the status, prestige, or compensation of full-time employment.

The group of women who were married with children at home scored significantly lower on both Mastery and Pleasure. Their feelings of Mastery seemed to depend on their husbands' approval of their role choice and whether or not the husband helped in doing household and childcare jobs. For most of these women, Pleasure also depended on how well things were going in their marriage. A phenomenon of "vicarious achievement" occurred in this group of women where many tended to identify with their husband's achievements and derive satisfaction from their accomplishments. Teresa, Katherine, Maria, and Isabel are married with children at home. As was found by Baruch, Barnett, and Rivers (1983), their feelings of Mastery have been negatively affected since their decision to stay home full-time. These women refer to their lack of sense of Mastery in terms of feeling incomplete, not having a sense of accomplishment in their lives, and not using their degree or training.
More recently, Helson, Elliot, & Leigh (1990) performed a longitudinal study that assesses personality variables and number of roles. Their findings indicate that women with one role have greater unhappiness, discontent, alienation, and lack of organization. They also found no evidence that 3-role groups had more role conflict or overload. These findings suggest that although employment may create difficulties for women in caring for children, it may also provide a buffer for other types of stress (Green & Russo, 1993).

Education also appears to be a significant preventive agent against psychological distress and depression. Kessler (1982) and Kessler and McRae (1982) found that for women, whether or not they were employed, education was more important than earnings or family income in predicting psychological distress. Another study found that employment outside the home did not protect a woman from depression independent of education (Warren & McEahren, 1983). One hypothesis is that education may lead to an increased sense of mastery and control, necessary for mental health and life satisfaction (Green & Russo, 1993). This, too, suggests that conditions to promote women's health require a balance between nurturant and productive
roles. It also explains, perhaps, why the at-home mothers express overall contentment with their lives. Even though they are not working outside the home, their high educational level creates enough of a sense of mastery and control to promote their life satisfaction.

4) What is the significance of gender in these women's lives? The women of this study discuss the emergence and living out of their roles as involving external messages of what it means to be a woman. These messages potentially affected which involvements were chosen and developed. It is difficult to determine the degree to which socialization and gender role messages are at play in these women's choices. But for Lynn, the messages she received about wanting to be both a mother and a physician were quite blatant:

When I was in high school I interviewed this ophthalmologist for a class project. I told him I wanted to be a doctor. He told me I had no place going into medicine and taking a spot away from someone who is going to work full time. Because my intentions, even in high school, were go to medical school and when I get out work part time and raise kids. He was so rude and made me really doubt myself.

Lynn recalls attitudes such as these as causing her great confusion and frustration well into adulthood. She states that she wanted to prove that she was not a "typical woman" just because she wanted to have babies. And because of
these efforts, she says: *I used to fight the things that I liked to do, like baking and gardening, because they were too stereotypical.*

Isabel also felt some societal pressure to have a baby before she reached her thirtieth birthday. She felt that as a woman it was what she was *supposed to do.*

It wasn’t until the last few years that I got the “baby bug”. Jay and I decided we would have kids eventually and we thought it would be great if we could both work part-time and then both stay home with the kids. For some reason I had to have a kid before I was 30. I don’t know where that came from, something I read maybe? But I decided on age 30 and was very determined. So during the last couple years of my doctoral program we started trying. I never dreamed that we would have trouble but we did. What an emotional rollercoaster it became. What we thought would be a magical thing became very scientific and frustrating. I got very depressed when a year went by and we still weren’t pregnant. It affected all parts of my life. I no longer cared about my career. I just wanted to be a mom. Age 30 was just looming ahead in the not-so-distant future.

This drive was in fact so strong that because of fertility problems, Isabel became temporarily apathetic about her doctoral pursuits. Now she finds herself with her long-awaited baby, but struggles to complete her doctorate and fulfill her career goals.

What was also quite interesting is that all of the full-time at home mothers that I spoke with thought that women were naturally better suited to care for children.
That, in turn, encouraged them to stay home. One of Maria’s reasons behind her postponement of residency was:

I think we are better at raising children. I think that the father’s involvement is very important. But if it was a choice between them, I think that women do a better job. I think we are born that way.

Similarly, Katherine states:

I think in general women are better suited as caregivers for children. I say that in general because I know that there are men who are excellent at staying home with the kids. In general, though, I think that women are better suited. It’s so sexist to say that but I think that’s the way it is. Inherently, yes I think we are born that way. We are more suited. Silly to say it, but we are inherently more nurturing. We have contact with your baby that your husband never has for those nine months. I think there’s that bonding and that special feeling that goes on when a woman is pregnant that when a baby is born, that nurturing is automatically there. Fathers love their children and can spend 24 hours a day with them, but there is that bond there between a mother and a child that they will never have.

And Teresa explains:

Deep down I think it’s the best decision for me to stay home because I don’t think that anybody could do this as well as I can. Stay home and raise my kids. I think there are things that I provide to them as a mother that I don’t think anyone else could...not even their father.

Not all of the women expressed a belief that women were better suited as caregivers. In fact, all of the women who work outside the home think that this idea is at
best, an antiquated belief, and at worst "a crock of shit" meant to oppress women. For example, Gladys questions this idea:

Women are more nurturing? I think that’s socialization; it is what society expects. I’ve heard that women are naturally better because of the fact that they are pregnant. It is true that the experience of pregnancy is different for women than it is for men. But I don’t think that it affects how you raise them. I know some awful moms and some great dads.

Others state:

I’ve always been more to the “it depends on the person”. I have known more women that I think that are better caretakers than their spouses. I can’t honestly say that it’s a gender thing. (Angela)

I don’t think so. I don’t believe that. I think that my husband can be a better “mom”. When he has time he dotes on them. I really don’t agree with that because it’s like fixing you into your roles. So if that is true, then why are the womenfolk working? Because women are not expected to work and they are doing better by working. I think that is not agreeable. I wouldn’t want anybody to be oppressed because of that belief. Why should woman be the only person to take care of children? (Madhu)

Both Isabel and Nan vehemently deny the validity of this statement:

I think that is a crock of shit! I think that we are socialized to believe that...and despite my best efforts to believe otherwise, I think I’ve been socialized to believe that too. I realize that there is a biological bond between a mother and her child but I think that a similarly strong bond can be built between a child and father. (Isabel)
I think it’s a crock of shit. Pardon my French. I think that right now I am nursing and I have the chest in charge, that sort of puts me in the front line for a lot of things. But except for that, nothing that I do can’t be done by a man. I think it depends on the individual. I know some women that are terrible mothers and I know some guys that are really good fathers. It’s individual and how much commitment you bring to your job and your role as parent. (Nan)

The Cognitive-Structural approach can be used to examine how these women respond to outside pressures and gender expectations placed upon them. The less cognitively complex person may be more likely influenced by cultural demands (external locus of control). For example, she may succumb to choosing her career from a restricted, stereotypically female range of occupational fields that does not reflect her intellectual abilities and talents (Cook, 1993; Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983). Or, she may be more likely to adhere to her early childhood socialization that reinforces marriage and children as crucial to her well-being (Baruch & Barnett, 1978, p. 190). A more cognitively complex individual, on the other hand, would be more self-run and less likely to behave according to gender stereotypes (internal locus of control).
Implications of the Study

Although a number of implications for research and practice have been presented throughout the discussion of results, additional implications are briefly mentioned here.

The women. The first, and most surprising, implication of this study was in its direct effect on the participants. Several of the women who participated in this study indicated that our conversation impacted their lives in some way. A few days after our interview, for example, Gladys told me that she couldn’t stop thinking about our discussion. She said that she has been inspired to write some poetry on what it means to be a mother.

After our interview, Maria got in touch with a residency program so that she could do some observation. Again, she told me that our conversation inspired her to do so.

Teresa said:

I have to tell you, that when I was looking at these questions before you came over...it’s like it dawned on me that I never really thought about what I’d be doing in ten years. I don’t even know what I’m going to do in the next ten minutes. It really got me thinking...um...almost like...it was kind of a wake-up call. Now I am thinking about it a lot.

Finally, since our interview, Nan established a part-time contract with her medical practice. She told me, After our
conversation, I knew I just had to do it. Whether these life changes are considered positive or negative, by these women and their families, one thing is for certain: our contact with our participants affects their lives directly. Thus, it is very important that we proceed carefully as we quickly enter and exit their lives.

The professions. Career counseling programs, in both high school and college, may incorporate the findings of this study when creating appropriate interventions for women. First of all, in order to make career counseling a meaningful experience, developmentally appropriate counseling is necessary in order to maintain an appropriate and effective balance of challenge and support. This study suggest that a group of women, with similar educational backgrounds and family commitments, developed these roles at different stages in their lives. Secondly, career counselors can encourage women to explore and understand their needs for autonomy/connection and mastery/pleasure so that they can choose roles that best fulfill these needs. Career counselors can help women to explore the influence of environmental, background, and contextual variables on their career and family goals. They can also debunk some of the myths about motherhood, and the grave conflict women
endure when attempting to combine work and family. Thus, through challenge and support, career counselors can encourage women to create a unique balance for themselves that effectively combines their needs for achievement and nurturing.

The professions that employ women can also benefit from what has been learned in this study. Two of the most content working mothers in this study, Gladys and Angela, describe professional atmospheres that are supportive of their motherhood roles. Such support can promote a woman’s well-being and success both at home and at work. The stress that can result from a lack of support can create an almost debilitating state, such as it does for Nan. The result could be women who continue working but are not as effective as they could be, or women who leave the profession because of intolerable stress. The professions would surely be negatively affected by either of these outcomes.

The professions, in this case medical and academia, also need to be aware of the group of very talented, intelligent, hardworking women who have postponed their careers to raise children. They will likely see these women attempting to re-enter the professions at an atypical
age—late 30s or 40s after their children have grown. It would be in the best interest for both women and the professions to be prepared for this phenomenon to make their transition as smooth as possible. Finally, the professions may want to reevaluate how they view, recruit, hire, and compensate part-time positions. There appears to be a significant group of bright, capable women who seek part-time employment so that they might balance their careers with their family lives. As has been my personal experience, it is often difficult for women with graduate degrees to attain a part-time position that is challenging and rewarding. Furthermore, many universities and medical clinics do not provide benefits for part-time employees; part-time professionals also may not be eligible for promotions such as tenure. They may not receive the respect of their full-time counterparts—this is often referred to as “mommy-tracking” whereby these employees are seen as doing their job “on the side” and with less dedication. With all of this in mind, some women may opt to stay home full-time rather than subject themselves to a part-time position for which they are overqualified, undercompensated, and undervalued. In essence, we need to
reevaluate and restructure assumptions about work and who works (women as well as men) to be more compatible with development, satisfaction, and productivity.

**Future research.** Finally, there are implications for future research. Behavioral, psychosocial, and cognitive approaches in combination clearly provide a more complete picture of these participants’ choices and identity development than do any of the approaches in isolation. Different areas of emphasis between and within the approaches take into account the multiple influences on their identity as well as how they participate in their own development. Recent theorists do not consider efforts to combine theoretical perspectives as adequate. Instead, they call for a model of women’s identity development that is multi-faceted and uses a reflexive or dialectical approach to the study of women’s lives (Gomez, 1996; Jones, 1995; Peck, 1986). The implications for research, then, include more studies that examine the various aspects of women’s identity toward the creation of a more holistic model.

Although theory development was not a goal of this exploration, what emerged from this study could very well be the beginnings of a new theory for women’s identity and
career development. More specifically, I may tentatively offer some theoretical concepts of women's identity development. Concepts such as alignment and sequencing emerged from an exploration of the lives of these ten women; they may also enlighten other women's identity development and life patterns. Theoretical concepts such as these may also serve as a stepping-stone for future research and more complex theory development. It is my intention to pursue this goal in future research.

Limitations and Strengths of This Study

The rather restrictive sample characteristics are a definite weakness of this study. Although I did seek diversity in age and race/ethnicity, the participants are all heterosexual, married, and have biological children. The construction and nature of roles in single, lesbian, and adoptive mothers would add to the complexity of the literature on women's development.

Like many other qualitative studies, the small sample size could be construed as a weakness of my study. However, the goal of this inquiry was not generalizability; it was an increased understanding of the women who participated. Thus, the small sample size allowed for depth and richness in description and analysis.
My own experience as a “high achieving mother” may be viewed as both a strength and a limitation of the study. When I began this study, I was facing decisions about my own career and family roles; my husband and I were trying to have our first baby and I was trying to finish my doctorate. I began to wonder how I would balance my motherhood and professional roles that would be best for myself and for my family. I also realized, with a degree of frustration, that my husband did not seem to face this same conflict. This began a significant period in my life of self-discovery and a recognition of how I fit into a gendered world. It also became the impetus for this research.

Therefore, I was “biased” as I began this inquiry. Based upon my experiences as a woman, professional, and potential mother I had some preconceived notions about role development, role construction, and conflict. This provided theoretical sensitivity to the topic at hand, but also presented a challenge for me not to impose my own story on the stories of the women of this study. I was forced, through the literature review, data collection, data analysis, and writing process, to rethink my own assumptions and perspectives. The result was personal
growth and an insider's view on the issues faced by women. In essence, I had initial concerns about being "too close" to my research. I will never forget the words of one professor to whom I expressed this concern. She said: *If you don’t write about it, who will?*

**Summary**

It is clear that the behavioral, psychosocial, and cognitive-development approaches focus on different, but equally relevant, aspects of development. An appreciation of these differences, as well as an understanding of how the approaches complement one another, helps us to achieve a multi-faceted approach to women's identity development. It also provides an awareness of the complexity of women's lives.

A review of the behavioral and psychosocial theories indicate that inherentness (most prevalent in early and late development) and cultural conditioning (more prevalent in the 20s) together create the age-related issues we face as well as the choices available to us. Thus, the myriad of biological, social, and cultural changes that occur have a profound affect on women's experiences (Leonard, et al., 1987). Normal developmental issues are confounded by major changes in family structure and economics, new social and
professional roles and expectations, and the pressures associated with each of these. Therefore, we can not maintain a static view of women’s identity development in light of our ever-changing society.

The cognitive-structural theories provide the missing piece for the behavioral and psychosocial theories—meaning. They highlight the self-reflective nature of the women of this study, and how they understand and influence their own development. The cognitive-structural perspective interacts with both the behavioral and psychosocial theories. It tells us more about the process of how they perceive and resolve, or fail to resolve, the age-related demands that are placed upon us by culture and biology. Although choices may be a response to our needs for connectedness/autonomy or closeness/uniqueness, they are also restricted or facilitated by one’s environment (e.g., gender-role and occupational stereotyping, discrimination, gender bias in education, work-family conflict, family background).

Identity development involves how we perceive and define ourselves and our relationships to others. Identity is not equal to our roles (except at some cognitive levels). Nonetheless, the choices we make regarding our
roles are a reflection of how we define ourselves and our place in the world. In other words, our choices are often times how our identity (or lack thereof) is lived out. The nurturing and achieving aspects of the Self are balanced across a complex equation: internal forces (i.e. personality, internalized gender role ideology) and external forces (i.e. time, money, societal expectations) combine and are prioritized to form the Self. Each woman orders her roles in a unique way; some living them out simultaneously while others participate in their own form of sequencing.

It is obvious that family roles and responsibilities continue to be a major factor in the identity development of women. The choices a woman makes about her career and family roles are related to her attitudes and values, as well as how she defines herself in relation to work, marriage, and family (Booth & Duvall, 1980).

In the early stages of the recent feminist movement, women discovered the costs they paid for concentrating on the nurturant role to the detriment of their work lives. The second wave of the new women’s movement was this concerned with the rediscovery of nurturant roles and values (Friedan, 1981). Today, it seems that the question
for most women, and the women of this study, is how to negotiate the life course to "have it all". Isabel states: 

*I just want to have it all. Is that so wrong?*

Having it all, for women, does not necessarily mean having it all at once. The women of this study have development, organized, and lived out their roles in unique ways and patterns to accommodate this goal. It is worth our while to understand and appreciate these complex patterns so that we can more effectively guide young women as they face similar challenges.

Personally, this process has proven to be both challenging and rewarding. My experiences with the women of this study have enriched my life in ways that go beyond a completed dissertation. I also learned, first hand, what it is like to manage the roles of mother and scholar, as I write this dissertation between feedings, playdates, temper tantrums and diaper changes. Through my own unique negotiation of roles I, too, set out to reach my goals and live out my achieving and nurturing Selves.
References


APPENDIX A

Letter Requesting Participation in Study

{date}

{salutation}

I am currently a Ph.D. student in Educational Administration and Higher Education at The Ohio State University. My research interests include the ways in which women experience several aspects of their lives—gender, career, and family—and how these experiences impact and are affected by identity development. This study focuses on how high-achieving women, specifically women who have earned a Ph.D./MD, make major decisions regarding their career and family roles. The potential value this research could have on the lives of women is very exciting.

I would like you to consider participating in this study. By participating you will have an opportunity to tell your story in your own words. You will also contribute to a relatively unexplored area on the experiences of women with Ph.D.s. Your willingness to participate would necessitate a couple of interviews with me at a mutually agreed upon time. Please be assured that your participation in this study will remain confidential. Your name will not be connected with any materials produced for this study.
As I am eager to begin this research, I will phone you in the next week to further discuss the possibility of your being involved. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at home at (715) 848-2851 or at schul9@visto.com.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa Giordano
Doctoral Student
Educational Administration and Higher Education
The Ohio State University
Confirmation Letter

{date}

{salutation}

I greatly appreciate your interest in my study! This letter outlines specific details of your participation.

Interviews will be conducted by Lisa Giordano and will last approximately 1-1 ½ hours at a mutually agreed upon time and location. Open-ended questions will focus on how you define, choose, experience, and evaluate your work and family roles. If appropriate, subsequent interviews will be conducted at your convenience. All interviews will be audiotaped for transcription.

Confidentiality will be maintained by numerically coding the audio tapes and by not identifying your name to anyone verbally or in any written material produced from this study. Excerpts from the interview may be used in written reporting of this study, but again, your name will not be identified. Tapes from interviews will be safely locked and will be destroyed within a year of the completion of the study.

Often, people find it personally enlightening to reassess their choices and the paths of their lives. I offer you this opportunity. Others find such self-exploration and assessment to be difficult and uncomfortable. Please be assured that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.
I hope participating in this study still sounds attractive to you. I will phone you next week to confirm your interest and to set up our first interview.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at home at (614) 851-8765 or schul9@visto.com.

I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Lisa Giordano
Doctoral Student
Educational Administration and Higher Education
The Ohio State University.
APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY Protocol No. 99E0059

Consent for Participation in Social and Behavioral Research

I consent to participate in the research project entitled **High Achieving Women: Work and Family Roles**.

**Robert F. Rodgers (Principle Investigator)** or his authorized representative **Lisa Giordano (Co-Investigator)** has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described as have alternate procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Further, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

I agree to have my interview audio taped and understand that a transcription will be provided to me at my request.
Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily.

Signed: __________________________
(Research Participant)

Date: ________________________

Signed: __________________________
(Principle Investigator or his Authorized Representative)
APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTION SET

Occupation/Homemaking Decision
- Describe your career development since age 18, including any reassessments you made along the way.
- What possible alternatives were considered? How do you feel about your decision now?
- Why do you work/stay home?
- What role did your friends, parents, siblings, spouse, and children play in your decision to work/stay home?

Life Dream
- When you were twenty years old, what did you want most to do with your life? Have you done it? If so, what factors enabled you to fulfill this goal? If not, what factors made it difficult for you to meet your goal?
- What would you like to be doing ten years from now? What do you think you actually will be doing?
- When your child was born, did you reassess you life? If so, could you tell me about it?
- What have been your major accomplishments in your life?
- What have been your major setbacks in your life?

Employment
- In thinking about your current/most recent job what aspects did you find rewarding?
- In thinking about your current/most recent job, what were your concerns?
- All things considered, how satisfied are/were you with your current/most recent job?
- In general, how good would you say you are at your work?
• If you were to get enough money to live as comfortably as you’d like for the rest of your life, would you continue to work? If so, would you continue to work at the same job as you have now?
• Is there anyone who as helped to guide, encourage, or inspire your work over a period of years? If so, who? Could you tell me about it?
• What are the good things, if any, that you see in combining work with marriage and children?
• What problems, if any, do you find in combining work with marriage and children?

Homemaking
• In thinking about your being a homemaker, what aspects do you find rewarding?
• In thinking about your being a homemaker, what areas are concerns?
• All things considered, how satisfied are you with being at home rather than having a paid job?
• In general, how good would you say you are at being a homemaker?
• If you could have someone take care of things at home, would you like an outside job? If so, could you tell me more?

Marriage
• How would you define a “good marriage”?
• In thinking about your marriage, what aspects are rewarding?
• In thinking about your marriage, what areas are of concern?
• All things considered, how satisfied are you with your marriage?
• In general, how would you rate yourself as a wife?

Children
• How would you describe a “good mother”?
• In thinking about your children, what aspects are rewarding?
• In thinking about your children, what areas are concerns?
• In general, how good would you say you are as a mother?
• All things considered, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you in your role as a parent?
• What important values do you most want your son(s)/daughter(s) to learn?

 Gender roles
 • Please describe for me society’s expectations for women and for men.
 • How realistic are these responsibilities/expectations?
 • How closely do you fulfill these responsibilities/expectations?
 • Some people’s feel that men and women are better suited for certain roles. What do you think?
 • How would you define a “traditional woman”? What about a “non traditional woman”? How do you fit these descriptions?
 • How do your views about what it means to be a woman influence the decisions you make about your career and family?

 Closing questions
 • If you had your life to live over again, are there any major or minor things that you would do differently? If so, what?
 • What advice would you give a woman contemplating having Children and regarding her work/family roles?
 • Is there anything else you’d like to add?
APPENDIX E

Categories and Codes for Analysis

Emergence of roles
Internal
   "Always Knew"
   Calling
   Fits with personality
External
   Love and affection
   Perception of conflict
   Gender
Role models
   Positive
   Negative

Nature of Roles
Motherhood
   What it’s like
   Why?
      Love of motherhood
      Emergence
      Daycare
      Financial
      Self + child (inseparable)
Dual Roles
   What it’s like
   Complexity of schedule
   Why?
      Love of motherhood
      Love of career
      Emergence
      Financial
      Wholeness/Balance
Self assessment
Good mother
Time
Doing what’s best
Taking care of self
Good role model
Managing dual roles
Good mother
Good worker
Doing what’s best
Taking care of self
Good role model

Tension
Degree of
Sources of
Self
Choice incompatible with self
Feeling incomplete
Lacking sense of accomplishment
Not using degree, training, skills
Choice compatible with self but too many demands
No time for self
Housework
Falling behind in career
Child
Separation from child
Time for child
Breastfeeding
Use of childcare
Using it
Not using it
Relationship with spouse
No time as couple
“He doesn’t get it”
Money
Gender expectations
Fulfilling them
Not fulfilling them
Not fitting definitions

Nature of tension
Guilt
Anger

340
Depression
Exhaustion
Self-Doubt

Alignment: Making it Work
Satisfaction
Sequencing
Part-time
Getting support
   Spouse
   Parents and family
   Friends
Ancillary Services
   Childcare
   Housekeeping
Staying connected