WOMEN, WORK AND MOTHERHOOD: THE BALANCING ACT

A STUDY OF WHITE MIDDLE-CLASS WOMEN

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The thesis was basically exploratory in nature. A staged life cycle model, with three key stages, was developed which jointly incorporated women's work and motherhood roles. The chosen stages led to a focus on white middle-class women. This was therefore the target group from which the samples were drawn and the focus of any generalisation from these studies. The primary focus of the work was on the decision-making processes that women go through in making the transition from one stage to the next. This was looked at in terms of a cost/benefit model that incorporated meaning through an exploration of the stresses and satisfactions that women experienced at the three identified stages. This allowed the initial decision-making model to be 'unpacked', and the relevant factors to be identified. These were considered in detail and looked at in the context of the relevant literature. One factor, role conflict, was explored further in a separate survey where roles were found to be potential sources of support as well as of demands. In looking at the decision to return to work, five factors were found to be particularly important to the women, and these were successfully checked for reliability in a separate study. The research was started in 1986, and the surveys were undertaken in 1987 and 1988.

Results also allowed the formulation of a stress/satisfaction model, and when looked at in relation to the decision-making processes, it was postulated that decision-making would be easier if certain criteria were met. The decision-making model was used to explore the implications for women's training in general, and

the training of women returners in particular. In relation to the latter, it was found that women anticipating the return to work expected it to be more stressful than did those women actually experiencing that stage, suggesting that women may overestimate the size of the problem at the post-break stage, and thus delay returning to the labour market. The strengths and weaknesses of the models were recognized and certain recommendations for further research were made.

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PREFACE

High unemployment is undoubtedly one of the major problems in Britain today, and yet there is still a shortage of skilled labour. Instead of the emphasis on training or retraining under- or unemployed men, an alternative might be to look more closely at how we utilise women in the workforce. There are two problems which immediately confront this approach. Firstly, not enough women fulfil their potential with regard to skilled labour and, secondly, occupational downgrading is a common occurence. Many women find that they go back into employment at a lower level, when they return after a break for children. It is important, therefore, not only to look at the way in which women's work careers actually develop and progress, but also to understand the personal and external barriers which may get in the way of this.

For those women who become mothers, their work roles and their parenting roles appear not to be as easily separable as they are for the majority of working men. To get a better understanding of why this might be, and the implications that this has for their career/child-rearing histories, it is necessary to look at the interaction between women's attitudes to, and experiences of work, and their roles, or anticipated roles as mothers. A staged, life-cycle model has therefore been put forward which jointly incorporates women's roles as both mothers and workers, and the focus of the thesis is primarily on the factors that that influence decision-making at the different points in this cycle.

While there is an overlapping literature from role theory and other

areas, there is no substantial body of theory that relates specifically to these issues. It would be inappropriate to formulate and test out hypotheses against a background lacking in detailed information, and the thesis, therefore, is essentially exploratory in nature, particularly in its early stages. It attempts to identify and describe patterns of relationships in the data, and then goes on to generate hypotheses based on this original material.

The author embarked on these studies reported in the thesis in 1986 and completed them in 1988. She subsequently trained and qualified as a clinical psychologist before returning to complete writing-up. The thesis was submitted in October, 1993, while the author was working full-time in the field of Adult Mental Health.

The following sections discuss the thesis in more detail, chapter by chapter. The thesis begins (Chapter 1, Introduction) with a review of the literature. In doing this it became obvious very quickly that it would be impossible to encompass the enormous amount of research that has been undertaken on the subject of women and work. However, very little research appears to have been undertaken into how women make the transition between the different stages in their career/child-rearing histories and what factors influence their decision-making processes. It was therefore decided to concentrate on these specific areas, focusing particularly on women's return to employment, post-career break.

As mentioned above, these issues were considered from the perspective of a stage model, set within the context of an overall

life-cycle. The focus was on three specific stages: the pre-break stage, made up of working women in full-time employment, without children; the career break, relating to women at home with children, not in paid employment; and women in the post-break stage, who had returned to work, either full or part-time, after a break for children. In order to focus on the interface between these three distinct stages, a decision was made to target a limited and primarily white middle-class group of women. The contact and sampling procedures were therefore designed with this in mind. The starting point was a cost-benefit model of decision-making, but rather than one that focused simply on the weighing-up of the different positive and negative factors involved, a model that incorporated **meaning** was postulated. The emphasis was therefore on a more personal perspective, as reflected in the women's perceptions of their situation. This was explored through the stresses and satisfactions of the home and work environments.

While this main introductory chapter deals with the initial issues, several aspects raised by the responses from the preliminary and main surveys, led to the development of a further survey (Chapter 5). In order to accomodate this, it was felt necessary to include a brief subsidiary introduction at the beginning of that chapter.

Chapter 2 deals with the methodological issues raised by the adoption of a specific study paradigm - ie. the use of questionnaire-based surveys - and the deliberate mixture and integration of qualitative and quantitative data and analysis. The development of the survey instruments was outlined and their

strengths and weaknesses considered. The procedures, common to the design of all the surveys, were looked at here, but those relating specifically to each individual survey were discussed more fully in the relevant chapter. The reliability and validity of the data was also examined. Techniques such as content analysis, used to analyse the qualitative data elicited in response to open questions, were described in detail, and their advantages and disadvantages considered. A description of the statistical analysis was also included.

Chapter 3, encompassing the preliminary survey, focused on women in the second stage of the research model, and attempted to elicit the factors contributing to the levels of satisfaction and stress associated with being at home with children. The women were asked to look at these issues in relation to their previous work situation, prior to the career break, and then to look ahead to their re-entry into the labour market at some point in the future. Returning to work was also explored in terms of the decision-making processes involved.

Analysis of the initial questionnaire data revealed that many of the women's concerns about re-entry into the labour market related to, or were dependent on family commitments. This was primarily concerned with the extent to which going back to work would fit in with existing home responsibilities, particularly in terms of the constraints involved. Chapter 3 also documents a separate, small-scale survey on a similar subject sample, which was carried out to investigate the extent to which these sorts of family commitments were perceived as a source of stress to the

women.

Chapter 4 consists of the main survey. This expanded the research in terms of the subject sample by looking at three separate groups of women, one group in each of the three identified stages: pre-career break, career break and post-career break. Assessments of previous stages and/or anticipation of future stages, as well as assessments of their current experiences, were made by the women in each of the three groups. These were explored in depth, with particular attention being paid to the decision-making processes. The survey was based on a quasi-experimental, 2-factorial design with 3 levels of each factor. The first factor was 'group' and the second, 'stage'; the first, a between-subjects factor and the second a within-subjects factor. It was therefore possible to compare the way in which the three groups assessed the satisfactions and stresses associated with each stage, and consider the extent to which this was dependent on whether they were looking back on a stage, currently experiencing it, or anticipating a future stage.

One problem area cited by the various respondents related to current or future (perceived) role conflict. This was identified as a major source of stress for working mothers as well as a significant factor for women in the career break anticipating this situation. There is a considerable amount of literature in this area, with relatively early papers focusing on a rather simple dual role hypothesis while more recent studies take a broader and more sophisticated view. While the literature from role theory overlaps with that of the thesis, it was not envisaged as a central focus of

the research, and was therefore referred to only briefly in the Introduction.

The third survey, outlined in Chapter 5, set out to investigate certain specific aspects relating to role conflict, and a brief review of the literature is therefore included at this point. It is often assumed that women who work **and** have a family will be subject to role conflict by the very nature of their situation. The working mother, by definition, necessarily occupies more than one role. However, it might be the total role demand, rather than any inherent conflict, that determines well-being. This survey compared the degree of role conflict and general well-being experienced by working women with differing levels of job and family commitment.

In the results and summary sections in Chapters 3-5, following each survey, not only are the results presented but also briefly discussed. This was felt to be a more appropriate way to deal with the data, because although the three studies were closely related in the thesis, they touched on different areas. This was particularly obvious when comparing the role conflict survey in Chapter 5 with the two earlier studies. The Discussion, therefore, takes a more general approach, pulling in data from all surveys as and when relevant.

The Discussion, in Chapter 6, 'unpacks' the initial decision-making model, thus allowing for the emergence of a more detailed model at each decision point. These expanded models focus on the factors identified by the women as being associated with the different

stages in their career/child-rearing histories. The factors are thus seen as the costs and benefits that the women weigh up in making decisions at the three identified decision points, and they are assessed in relation to the current literature. Levels of stress and satisfaction at the three different stages are also considered, and a stress/satisfaction model put forward which is linked in with the decision-making processes.

The limitations of the research are explored and several weaknesses highlighted. A number of recommendations are made regarding women's participation in the labour force, relating specifically to the return to work, post-career break. In particular, the implications of anticipating unnecessarily high levels of stress at that stage are considered. The strengths and weaknesses of the models are assessed, and recommendations for further research are made.

CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

1.0 WOMEN'S CHANGING ROLE - AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Women's role in the workplace is a topic that has attracted much interest and generated a considerable amount of research over the last two decades (Almquist, 1977; Liff, 1981; Dex, 1984; Parry, 1987; Freedman and Phillips, 1988; Nelson, Quick, Hitt and Moesel, 1990). This is hardly surprising when one considers the very marked change in the pattern of female employment that has occured in the twentieth century (Wainwright, 1978; Abercrombie, 1988). However, it is important to set this in an historical context, for concentrating on changes in this century implies some sort of stability in the pattern of female employment prior to this, and this is not the case.

In the pre-industrial economy, where the household was the basic unit of production, all family members were involved in different aspects of this production. During the early stages of industrialisation, many women continued to work both in the home and in agriculture, but some were employed in the new factories, the mills or in manufacturing industries. During the nineteenth century this pattern changed. According to the 1851 Census, 25% of married women held an 'extraneous occupation', although by the turn of the century there were only about 10% of married women in paid employment. The reasons for this change were complex and included such factors as the removal of certain kinds of work from the home, the growth of new areas of industrial work which became almost exclusively male, and "the prevalence of the Victorian ideology which decreed that a woman's place was in the

home" (Beechey, 1986). What is important here is the need to recognise the oft-forgotten fact that this latter concept is, historically speaking, a relatively recent phenomenon. Nevertheless, the changes during this century do indicate the growing importance of women's participation in the labour force, and the consequent necessity for looking specifically at women within this context.

There has been a dramatic increase this century in both the population of working women in general and of married women with children in particular. Women constituted 30% of the workforce in 1911, 37% in 1973 and 43% in 1988. The overall increase between 1971 and 1986 was entirely attributable to the increase in the number of women (Results of the 1986 Labour Force Survey, Social Trends, 1988), and the trend is set to continue. Between 1990 and the year 2000, the number of men in the civilian labour force is expected to remain static at around 15.9 million, whilst the number of women is projected to increase by 700,000 to reach 12.9 million (Social Trends, 1991). It is predicted that by the year 2000, women will make up 45% of the workforce (Employment Gazette, 1991; Social Trends, 1991).

Over a similar time period, the increase in the number of married women in the workforce has been even more dramatic, increasing in the first 70 years of the century by approximately 400% (Hakim, 1979). The proportion who were economically active rose from 10% in 1911 to 49% in 1974. (Social Trends, 1972 and 1976). It levelled off around this period and remained fairly static for the next few years. However, the picture changed considerably during

the 1980's, and the proportion of married women in employment rose from 47% in 1971 to 63% in 1988 (Social Trends, 1990).

1.1 THE DIFFERING WORK EXPERIENCES OF MEN AND WOMEN

Another important reason for focusing on women in the labour market is the extent to which their experieces can be seen to differ from those of men. Beechey (1986) puts forward four factors which differentiate women's working experiences fom the masculine norm:

1) The majority of women have what she refers to as 'interrupted working histories', in that most tend to give up work for a time after having a child, and return to employment at a later stage.

2) Because of the need to care for children, or other dependents, many women work part-time.

3) Women work in a wide variety of workplaces.

4) Many of the jobs that women undertake involve caring for, or servicing, other people.

It could be argued that the last two factors are not particularly helpful in differentiating women's experiences from those of men's. Men work in a wide variety of workplaces and are also involved in the service industries and caring professions. It is acknowledged, though, that many women are concentrated in low paying 'women's jobs' (Graham, 1984). However, the first two

factors are essential to any understanding of women's position in the workforce. Indeed, it can be argued that it is as a result of these very basic factors that many of the other documented differences (such as poorer wages, lower status, less promotional opportunities etc.) exist. A look at some of the current statistics related to women and work illustrate some of these differences.

Despite the equal value amendment to the Equal Pay Act, which came into effect in January 1984, there is still a considerable gap between the earnings of women and men. In 1977, women's gross hourly earnings reached a peak of 75.5%, but continued to remain below that figure until 1989 (Employment Gazette, 1990)

TABLE 1.1 WOMEN'S EARNINGS* RELATIVE TO MEN'S

WOMEN'S EARNINGS AS A PER CENTAGE OF MEN'S			
YEAR	YEAR	YEAR	YEAR
1970 63.1%	1979 73.0%	1984 73.5%	1989 76.4%
1975 72.1%	1980 73.5%	1985 74.1%	1990 76.6%
1976 75.1%	1981 74.8%	1986 74.3%	1991 77.8%
1977 75.5%	1982 73.9%	1987 73.6%	1992 78.8%
1978 73.9%	1983 74.2%	1988 75.1%	

Results of the 1990 & 1992 New Earnings Surveys

* Average gross hourly earnings, excluding overtime, of full-time employees, 18 and over, whose pay was not affected by absence.

The gap in wages can be attributed to two connected factors: a) widespread job segregation and b) the impact of childbearing on women's earning capacity. Because of their role as mothers, women spend a period of time out of the labour market, often returning to part-time employment, which is frequently associated with occupational downgrading (Social Trends, 1986; LLewelyn and Osborne, 1990). There is a considerable amount of evidence to demonstrate the extent of downward occupational mobility among women employed part-time. Drawing on data from the National Training Survey, Beechey (1986) found that a relatively high proportion of the women in low occupation groups, often working part-time, had been in higher status, full-time jobs ten years earlier. One in twenty five part-timers holding teaching qualifications, one in twelve holding nursing qualifications and one in six with clerical and commercial qualifications were found to be working in low-skilled catering and cleaning occupations. One in five of all the women in this occupational group had held a full-time post in a different occupational group ten years earlier.

The 1986 Labour Force Survey (Social Trends,1988) indicated that most working men and the majority of non-married women worked 35 hours or more per week. However, married women had a far greater variety of working hours than the other two groups, and the majority were involved in part-time work. In fact, as many as 88% of all part-time employees are women (Labour Force Survey, 1984). As pointed out in Social Trends (OPCS, 1989), such employment offers low pay, poor employment conditions and only limited training and promotion prospects. Basic employment rights are also dependent on number of hours worked, and it is, therefore,

those employees working the least number of hours, ie. predominantly married women, who have the least protection.

Involvement in part-time work is often undertaken only through lack of alternative options, and indeed this can be seen as poor use of a potentially valuable resource. Research for the Equal Opportunities Commission, cited in Berry-Lound (1990), suggests that the constraints to women's effective engagement in the workforce stem primarily from their traditional roles as carers in the family and from the peripheral nature and limited earnings potential of part-time work opportunities.

It is interesting to look at the differences between women and men's experience of work in terms of what they actually do. Women seem to be heavily concentrated in relatively few occupations, and these are frequently the ones with a large demand for part-time labour (Abercrombie, 1988). The great majority of working women (81%) hold jobs in the service industries compared with just over half of the male labour force. 'Clerical and related' and 'catering, cleaning, hairdressing and other personal services' alone make up just over 50%, and there is an even greater concentration in the service industries among those women who work part-time (88%) and those with children (83%) (Employment Gazette, 1990).

Hakim (1979, 1981) has looked at patterns of occupational segregation, and suggests that the twentieth century has seen a marked trend towards greater 'vertical segregation' with a proportionately greater concentration of men in higher grade

occupations and women in lower grade ones. Even if women do succeed in entering traditionally well-paid jobs, it has been suggested (Pfeffer and Davis-Blake, 1987) that if too many of them enter a particular field, salaries will eventually decline vis-a-vis those of men - where work becomes defined as 'women's work', wages will decrease (Freedman and Phillips, 1988).

The number of hours which women work, and, indeed, whether or not they work at all, is strongly influenced by the presence or absence of children in a household. In 1979, 69% of women without dependent children were working compared with 52% of those with dependent children, and only 28% of those whose youngest child was under 5. Of the latter group, approximately 75% worked part-time (Leonard & Speakman, 1986). However, the latter part of the 1980's showed a sharp increase in the number of women with dependent children who were going out to work. Between 1984 and 1989, the percentage of employed women in this category increased from 47% to 55%, with the likelihood of their being employed increasing with the age of the youngest dependent child. The difference between the figures for the two years is even more marked if one considers those women with children under five. In 1984, 27% of such women were in employment, whereas by 1989 this had increased to 40% (Social Trends, 1991).

It is clear, then, that the burden of responsibility for childcare appears to rest almost exclusively on women, thus affecting their availability for employment. However, those mothers who do work, and, as mentioned above, this is an increasing number, are usually responsibile for finding and organising childcare facilities, and for

managing all the practical day-to-day arrangements (Chambers, 1989). Even when children are at school, arrangements need to be made for when they return, and for school breaks and holidays. This can be seen as a major difference between men's and women's experience of working life.

The availability of adequate childcare facilities is therefore essential for those women with dependent children who seek employment.

1.2 CHILDCARE FACILITIES

Despite the increasing need for childcare facilities, the situation appears to have got worse, rather than to have improved, over time. Between 1949 and 1970, the number of local authority day nurseries declined from 903 to 435 (Wainwright, 1978). In a survey of women's employment undertaken in Britain in 1968, Hunt (1968) reported that a quarter of mothers of under 5's said they would work if childcare facilities existed. Bone (1977) found that ten years later two thirds of mothers of under 5's would like to share the task of childcare with someone else. In a Central Policy Review of services for young children with working mothers (HMSO, 1978) only 120,000 of the 900,000 under 5's whose mothers had a job, were provided with either full or part-time day care. Virtually no provision was made for the 2.5 million 5 -10 year olds with employed mothers. Even for the career woman, the situation does not seem to be improving. In a study of the employers of professional and managerial women, entitled 'Women, Career Breaks and Re-Entry', the Institute of Manpower Studies

(1985), reported that:

> "In Britain it would appear that both state and
> employer have opted out of serious assistance
> with child care facilities".

In both the U.S. and Britain the employment rate for mothers of pre-school children more than doubled between 1961 and 1977, and yet childcare facilities were not increased during that period in either country (Oakley, 1981). The rate continued to rise dramatically throughout the 1980's (see above). In Britain in 1984, 27% of women with pre-school children were employed, whereas by 1989 the figure had increased to 40% (Social Trends, 1991). The U.S. has also seen similar increases in this category of working women over the same period (Klerman and Leibowitz, 1990), and yet it is still felt, in both countries, that the main barrier for women wanting to return to work is the absence of good and affordable child care facilities (Bowlby, 1990; Hardill and Green, 1991; Marshall and Marx, 1991). It would seem that what Oakley wrote in 1981 is still valid today:

> "Undoubtedly the most stiking aspect of out-of-home
> provision for children in most industrial capitalist
> countries is that whenever the demand among mothers
> for such provision is measured, it is very much greater
> than the actual supply of those facilities."

1.3 A LIFE CYCLE PERSPECTIVE

The data suggests that since the responsibility for childcare falls almost exclusively on women, their experience of work has to be looked at within the context of their roles as mothers. These roles, in turn, can be viewed within the overall context of the family. It has been argued that more emphasis should be placed on the interdependence of work and family roles (Gutek, Nakamura and Nieva 1981; Morgen, 1990; Kibria, Barnett, Baruch, Marshall and Pleck 1990), as:

> **both need to be considered in order to**
> **"describe how individuals' functioning**
> **in either of these spheres is affected**
> **by their involvement in the other".**
> (Pleck, 1977).

Waite (1980) argues that the family life-cycle "provides a valuable context within which to study labour force participation of married women". It would therefore seem sensible to look at the interaction between women's experiences of work and their roles as mothers from this perspective, and start by considering various models of the family life cycle.

Although reference was made to the family life cycle in a sociology textbook as early as 1931 (Sorokin, Zimmerman and Galpin), the concept was first explored in detail by Glick (1947, 1955). He identified six stages, the first starting with marriage, the second with the birth of the first child, and the third with the birth of the last child. The fourth stage he termed 'the shrinking

circle', and this was defined by the departure of the first child. The fifth stage, or 'the empty nest', started when the last child left home, and ended with the death of one spouse. The final stage, the death of the remaining spouse, closed the cycle.

The stages which make up the family life cycle as used in a study by Olson, McCubbin, Barnes, Larsen, Moxen & Wilson (1983), have certain elements in common with Glick's model. In a cross-sectional study, they looked at more than 1000 families drawn from every occupational, educational and income level of American society. All the families were intact and at different stages in the family life cycle. Seven stages were identified:

1) Young couples without children. At this stage the couple have not yet encountered the needs and demands of young children.

2) Families with pre-school children aged 0 - 5. These families are seen as child-centred.

3) Families with school age children aged 6 - 12. Here the focus is on the education and socialization of children.

4) Families with adolescents aged 13 - 18. Emphasis is on the challenges associated with dealing with adolescents.

5) Families with older adolescents, aged 19 or older. In this fifth stage children are beginning to leave home and establish identities and roles outside the family.

6) Empty Nest Families. These are defined by the absence of children, with attention being turned towards the couple.

7) Families in Retirement. The husband is aged over 65.

Here, then, the stages are defined almost entirely by the absence or presence of children, and by the age of the children. Work experience is then mapped onto these stages and is, in this sense, subordinate to them. In a study that looked at coping strategies among dual-career men and women, Schnittger and Bird (1990) used five family life cycle stages, virtually identical to the first five identified by Olson et. al. (above). Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) and Hill (1986) also looked at life stages in terms of children's absence or presence in the home, and the life stage model put forward by Lopata (1966) is similarly based on the ages and number of children in the family. Brannen (1987), however, suggests that this approach to the life-cycle, with its emphasis on families and parenthood, ignores the many other roles that are played both within and outside the home, and diminishes the importance of employment. This is particularly important as it has been argued that women are now spending more time in roles that lie outside the traditional family life-cycle (Van Dusen and Sheldon, 1976; Macklin, 1987).

Hence, aspects of a woman's working experience have to be considered in terms of her role as a mother, and certain limitations of the family life cycle perspective then have to be acknowledged. The concept of the family life cycle, as presented by Glick (1947, 1955) was initially developed to describe a

'typical' family. It is based on the assumption firstly, that families start with marriage and secondly, that those marriages remain intact. This is hardly an assumption that can be made today when life-long monogamy is just one of several patterns (Roberts, 1984). The perspective is also, by definition, limited to experiences within the timespan of a particular family unit, and might well exclude a significant part of the work histories of many mothers today. Locker (1983) suggests that a family life cycle perspective might have been useful when, as in the past, a woman's life cycle was synonymous with that of her family's, but, she argues, "this subservience of the female life cycle to the family life cycle produced narrowly confined boundaries of stage appropriate behaviour for women". It is now well recognised that the family is simply one of many activities in the life cycle of women (Hooper, 1979).

It could therefore be argued that it might be more appropriate to take a general life cycle perspective, which, while taking children into account, focuses on the life course of an individual rather than a family. Van Dusen and Sheldon (1976) define the life cycle as:

> "a way of conceptualising the aging process: a
> sequence of statuses and roles, expectations
> and relationships, constituting, in the broadest
> meaning of the word, an individual's 'career'".

Burgoyne (1987), uses five life cycle stages to explore differing gender experiences throughout the life course, but the actual

stages she identifies encompass both male and female.

1) Childhood - preparing to grow up. This is associated with the growth of independence, autonomy and a sense of self.

2) Adolescence - becoming an adult. Four interelated transitions are associated with this period: completing full-time education; starting work; leaving home and forming a cohabiting partnership

3) Getting married and becoming a parent. This stage is identified with profound changes in status and identity.

4) Changes and transitions of adult life. There are no clearly identified markers or boundaries delineating this stage, but emphasis is on parenting, and the differing experiences of women and men in the home and work spheres.

5) Losses and endings. The final stage is associated with growing old and the physical aging process, the empty nest syndrome and retirement.

Although the second stage encompasses cohabitation, marriage (stage 3) is seen as a precursor to parenthood, but as Glick (1989) indicates, this sort of assumption can no longer be made. Nevertheless, it is a very broad perspective from which to study the individual, encompassing developmental, psychological and social aspects. Skinner and Fritchie (1988) take an equally broad, but very different approach. They focus exclusively on women, **but have little to say about women's working lives**. The six key

stages they identify are related to age:

1) Adolescence - First Pathways. This is associated with the first phase of womanhood.

2) Twenties - Split Loyalties. Daughter and adult, children, career and marriage are identified as possible areas of conflict.

3) Thirties - The Crowded Decade. This is seen as a period of consolidation, of putting down roots.

4) Forties - A Decade of Endings and Beginnings. This is seen as a time of change. Some women will have children leaving home, others will still have children of primary scool age. New career directions are possible.

5) Fifties - Continuing Life. This stage is associated with the balancing of personal, financial and leisure interests. Time is likely to become a scarce commodity, as a woman comes to terms with growing older.

6) Sixties - New Horizons. Formal retirement is seen to offer new possibilities. Health and money, or their absence, are particularly important.

Given that women's fertility span is approximately 30 years, any attempt to look at motherhood from an age-related life cycle perspective would have problems. These problems are readily apparent, as many of the events associated with the second, third

and fourth stages in Skinner and Fritchies' model (eg. the process of consolidation; areas of possible conflict between children, marriage and career; having children of primary school age at home; contemplating new career directions) are virtually interchangeable. Becoming a mother could occur in any or all of the first four stages. As long ago as 1957 Lansing and Kish argued that a person's stage in life was a more important factor than chronological age in terms of effects on experiences and behaviour. However, many theorists take a more flexible approach, and according to Rexroat (1985) the life cycle perspective has recently emerged as an important focus in the study of women's paid work.

Cohen (1987) uses the term 'life course' rather than 'life cycle', as, she argues, the latter implies fixed categories in the life of the individual. She suggests that the length of each stage varies and changes in response to wider social change, and new stages can emerge as a result. She states:

> "The responsibilities of parenthood, however, will
> be felt throughout the course of mothers' labour
> market careers".

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN WORK AND MOTHERHOOD

The point made in the above quote is central to any understanding of the interaction between a woman's role as mother and her role as employee. Indeed, it can be argued that the anticipation of these responsibilities is central to the way in whch women perceive

their future, even before they embark on either motherhood or a career. Burgoyne (1987) asked a class of 15 and 16 year old boys and girls to imagine that they were at the end of their lives, and to write their autobiographies. There were marked gender differences, in that the majority of girls still saw marriage as a critical turning point in their lives leading inevitably to domesticity and motherhood. Although some mention was made of careers, it tended to be related to the return to work after children, and the problems they expected to encounter as working mothers. Boys, however, wrote stories in which "occupational goals and achievments ran parallel with family events and domestic changes". Other studies in this area have reported similar results (e. g. Janman, 1989). As Busfield (1987) argues "men's identity has been centred far more on their occupation in the labour market than on being a parent" For women, on the other hand, having children is regarded as a core component of their identity (Oakley, 1980).

However, there appears to be very little research which has taken into account, within a life cycle perspective, the interaction between women's roles as mothers and their roles as paid employees But, as Llewelyn and Osborne (1990) point out:-

> "....it makes little sense to talk about
> the pattern of women's experience of
> paid work without also talking about
> the domestic and family responsibilites
> almost always assumed by women".

Gutek, Nakamura and Nieva (1981) stress the importance of looking at the interdependence of labour market employment and family responsibilities, and consider the reasons for the lack of research in this area. They suggest that this is because, firstly, the work sphere has traditionally been regarded as a male domain while the family and home is viewed as predominantly female. Secondly, much of the research which has been carried out tends to focus on either the work situation with little consideration of family responsibilities, or the family with inadequate attention being given to work. They argue that:

" In order to gain a real understanding of the dynamics of work-family interaction, it is necessary to look at specific combinations of work and family life".

PROPOSED MODEL

For the purposes of this study, the 'family life' part of this interaction has been narrowed down to focus solely on **motherhood**. The intention is to look at women's attitudes to, and experiences of different periods in their career/child rearing histories. It was felt that a model which took account of both the work role and the motherhood role, in its structure, would be the most useful in accomplishing this task. A 3-stage model has, therefore, been developed which jointly incorporates women's work roles and their roles, or anticipated roles as mothers. The three identified stages are seen as key stages within a woman's career/child-rearing history (see Diagram 1.2). The first stage,

pre-career break, is concerned with working women, in full-time employment, without children. The second focuses on women at home with children during a career break, while the third stage concentrates on the employed mother who has returned to work after a break for children. These stages, in turn, have been taken to represent sub-stages in an overall life course. By adopting this particular stage model, it was hoped to gain some insight into the ways in which women view their increasingly complex and multiple roles as mothers and employees, and plan their progress through the stages.

The model, then, can be said to have three major components:

1) it concentrates on an individual life course;

2) it assumes the importance of occupation for women, and

3) it considers the interaction between motherhood and occupation in defining that life course.

Diagram 1.2, in particular stages 2 to 5, reflects the typical pattern followed by a high proportion of women who complete their education, go into full-time employment, leave to have children and then return, after a break, to either part or full-time employment. However, alternative pathways are presented. Given the high rate of youth unemployment, some girls may move from stage 2, 'adolescence', to 3A, 'unemployed, no children'. There is also the possibility of moving from stage 2, or stage 3A, straight

into motherhood (illustated in the diagram by stage 3B). However, the majority of girls in 3A could be expected to move, in time, into stage 3. At some unspecified point in the future, those at stage 3, together with those in 3B would progress to stage 5 'employed. has children'. No distinction has been made between part and full-time employment, but, as mentioned earlier (see p. 8) a high proportion of employed women with children work part-time. An alternative to taking a career break is to take maternity leave (stage 4A).

DIAGRAM 1.2 ILLUSTRATION OF THE LIFE CYCLE HIGHLIGHTING THREE KEY STAGES IN A WOMAN'S CAREER/CHILD REARING HISTORY
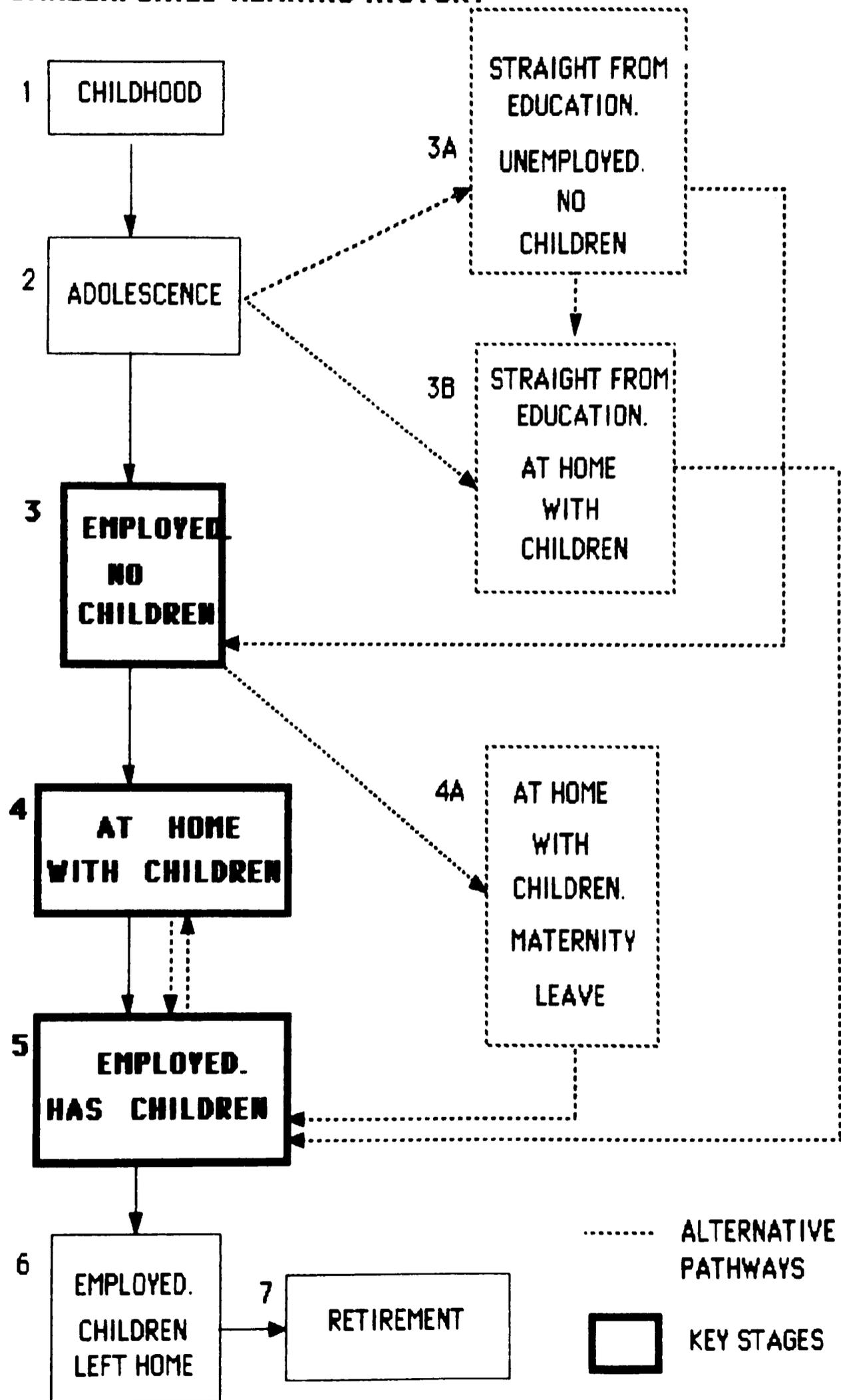
Although this is becoming more common, it is not an option that is either practical or possible for a large number of women, many of whom, particularly those in part-time work, are not eligible. The avilability and cost of childcare facilities (as discussed above) also make it difficult for a woman to return once her baby is born.

The short dotted arrows between stages 4 and 5 indicate women moving in and out of the job market as they return to work between children. While it is acknowledged that this is increasingly becoming a typical aspect of women's 'interrupted work histories', it was not possible to take into account in this project which was started in 1986.

The main thrust of the research is on stages 3 to 5, considered in more detail in the section on decision-making (p. 27), where they are expanded to provide a working model for the thesis. The various studies that follow look at these stages and attempt to 'unpack' each of the decision points.

1.4 TRANSITION POINTS - MOTHERHOOD AND THE RETURN TO WORK

There are two major transition points between the three key stages of this model:

1) Stopping work in order to have a child, and

2) Returning to work, post-career break.

THE TRANSITION TO MOTHERHOOD

Motherhood marks a major transition in a woman's life course (Rossi, 1980), and for many, if not most women, the issue of motherhood is one of the most central themes of life (Ball, 1987; Llewelyn and Osborne, 1990). For a woman, becoming a parent is inevitably accompanied by a wide range of changes in different areas of her life (Belsky, Lang and Huston, 1986), and such changes can be stressful (Brown, 1979). Indeed, pregnancy and the birth of a baby are seen as major stressful life events on the Holmes and Rahe (1967) rating scale. Unlike fathers, most new mothers will have to adjust to changes in employment opportunities, social networks, social status and identity, workload, and access to personal resources (Wimbush, 1987). The effects of these changes, and indeed the changes themselves, are often unexpected, as many women do not realise the extent to which their lives will be transformed by the birth of a child (Sharpe, 1984).

In a study of women chosen from the first bookings at a London hospital ante-natal clinic, Oakley (1980) interviewed 55 women, focusing specifically on the transition to motherhood. Each woman was interviewed twice before the birth of her child and twice at the post-natal stage. Five months after childbirth, 84% of the sample were categorised as having experienced post-natal blues, 71% anxiety, 33% depressed mood and 24% depression. In terms of satisfaction with motherhood, 69% expressed high satisfaction, 20% medium and 11% low satisfaction. 42% of the women described their feelings for the baby as good, 46% medium and 13% poor. These findings would seem to suggest that, at least in the

early stages of motherhood, many women may well experience changes in their mental health, and perhaps also in their expectations of motherhood and their anticipated feelings towards the new baby. Oakley (1980) goes on to look in more detail at the losses and gains that the particular sample identified as a result of the transition to motherhood. She concluded that although there were both negative and positive aspects:

"becoming a mother represents primarily
and essentially a loss of identity".

It has also been suggested that the quality of the marital relationship can suffer as a result of the transition to parenthod (Belsky, Spanier and Rovine, 1983; Harriman, 1986), although more recent research by MacDermid, Huston and McHale (1990) is less pessimistic. They undertook a comprehensive, longitudinal study of 98 couples in the first two and a half years of marriage, comparing those who remained childless with those couples who became parents in either the first or second year of their marriage. They concluded that although becoming a parent requires a renegotiation of husbands' and wives' marital roles, the transition is not necessarily detrimental to the quality of the relationship. It is only when there is a mismatch between the new marital activities and the men's and women's attitudes about appropriate role behaviour, that problems can arise.

RETURNING TO WORK

Clearly, any individual returning to work after a break would be constrained by a number of factors including their health, their skills and resources, and the job opportunity structure. However, for women returners, the consequences of motherhood are particularly significant. Using data from a large sample (N = 2536) Spenner and Rosenfeld (1990) found marriage and children to be among the strongest inhibitors of women assuming or reassuming work, particularly career-oriented employment. The majority of women leave the labour force just before the birth of their first child, and return, often on an intermittent basis between children, to work part-time. This pattern is strongly associated with downward occupational mobility (Martin and Roberts,1984; Bird and West, 1987). Part-time work is characterized by low pay, few benfits and poor work conditions, and confined, for the most part, to unskilled labour in a narrow range of occupations and industries. In terms of employment, then, the transition to motherhood results in "demotion in the world of work outside the home" (Oakley, 1987). Nevertheless, more and more women are returning to work after having children. Indeed, women returners are seen as the greatest single element in the growth of the workforce (Hardhill and Green, 1991), and it is predicted that women will make up between 90% and 95% of the increase in the workforce over the coming years (Berry-Lound, 1990; Employment Gazette, July, 1990).

For women with families, the return to work is also characterized by an additional workload. The unpaid domestic role is not

abandoned when a woman takes up paid employment outside the home. Housekeeping duties and the care and welfare of children are still assumed to be the woman's responsibility, even when she is married (Land, 1981; Coombs and Hovanessian, 1988; Marlowe, 1988; Greenglass, 1990). It might be expected, though, that with the return to work husbands would make more of a contribution to the regular household tasks. However, the increase in dual earner households has not led to a parallel increase in husbands sharing the burden of domestic chores and childcare (Bolger, Delongis, Kesslett and Wethington, 1989). Indeed, for fathers, the participation of their wives in paid employment outside the home has little effect on their activities, despite the rise in household requirements (Meissner, Humphreys, Meis and Scheu, 1975; Graham, 1984; Douthitt, 1989).

1.5 THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Clearly, women make numerous decisions during their career/child-rearing histories, although it is worth remembering that many of the situations that arise are not the result of conscious decision-making - for example, children are not always planned. Ball (1987) in a study of 279 women, from the thirty-sixth week of pregnancy to six weeks after birth, found that 32.8% had not planned their pregnancies. Decisions, though, can be made at many different levels, and it could be that some women make a very general decision to have children, if and when they come along. Alternatively, some women may have the option to terminate a pregnancy, and this is also a decision about parenthood. However, the focus here is on those women who choose

to have children and on the ways in which the interaction between their work role and their mothering role affects both that decision and, more importantly, the decision to return to work, post-break.

In terms of decision-making and the transition to motherhood, it would seem that women are increasingly choosing to delay motherhood until they reach their thirties (Blackie, 1986). In 1982, 25% of mothers in social classes 1 & 2 had their first babies when they were over thirty, compared with 20% in 1972, and the average age of all mothers is rising - from 23.9 in 1971 to 25.5 in 1982 (OPCS Birth Statistics, 1982). While this can perhaps be related to the increased availability of contraception, some women are making this choice because of commitment to, and involvement in, their careers.

However, for would-be mothers this first transition point is very limited when it comes to making decisions about their current work situations. Once a woman is expecting a child, there is little leeway as regards employment. Not only would it be physically impossible to continue working, but statutory legislation ensures that a woman can work for only a specified time during pregnancy. Biological necessity and legal requirements can therefore be seen to dictate certain boundaries within which women can operate.

However, no such requirements exist in relation to the transition from home to work, post-career break. This is a far more open process but one, nevertheless, that needs to be set within a context. The first consideration is whether or not a woman takes maternity leave, for, in theory, that should determine when she

returns. However, for those who do take maternity leave, many opt to leave their jobs by making the decision not to return within the statutory forty week period (Institute of Management Studies, 1985). Very few women today though, contemplating motherhood, would envisage remaining out of the labour market indefinitely. At some point, then, a decision will probably be made to return, and, if so, when?

Ferber (1982) refers to the decision to work as the 'increasingly independent variable', because, she argues, it is only relatively recently that "one can appropriately speak of the married woman's 'decision' whether or not to work outside the home". The term 'decision-making', in this sense, implies some sort of choice, but if no choice exists because, for example, economic hardship necessitates a woman returning to paid employment, then it could be argued that no real decision has been made. According to George (1980), decisions are only made where choices are available and where there is some uncertainty as to what the best choice is. Clearly, women's choices are limited by commitments and obligations as well as lack of opportunity (Llewelyn and Osborne, 1990). These limitations led Holland (1973) to conclude that occupational choice as such does not exist for women. However, Stake and Rogers (1989) argue that all women are now faced with having to make some choices and compromises about their home and job commitments.

Where there is scope for decision-making, there are two very significant decisions that deserve closer scrutiny when considering the interactions between work and motherhood - the

decision to leave work and have a child, and the decision to return. This latter decision can be separated out into the choice between taking maternity leave or taking a longer break. Diagram 1.3 (overleaf), which can be seen as a logical development of the life cycle model (see p. 22), highlights these key decision points, and sets them within the context of the three stages identified in the model.

DIAGRAM 1.3 KEY DECISION POINTS IN WOMEN'S
CAREER/CHILD-REARING HISTORIES

EMPLOYED
NO CHILDREN

unplanned
route

planned
route

HAVE CHILDREN
LEAVE WORK

DECISION
POINT 1

STAY AT WORK
NO CHILDREN

DECISION
POINT 2

RETURN TO WORK
AFTER MATERNITY
LEAVE

STAY AT HOME
WITH CHILDREN

DECISION
POINT 3

RETURN TO WORK
AFTER BREAK

KEY STAGES IN MAIN MODEL

KEY DECISION POINTS

FOR EACH SUBSEQUENT CHILD WOMEN WILL LEAVE
WORK AND GO BACK THROUGH DECISION POINT 2
AND/OR DECISION POINT 3
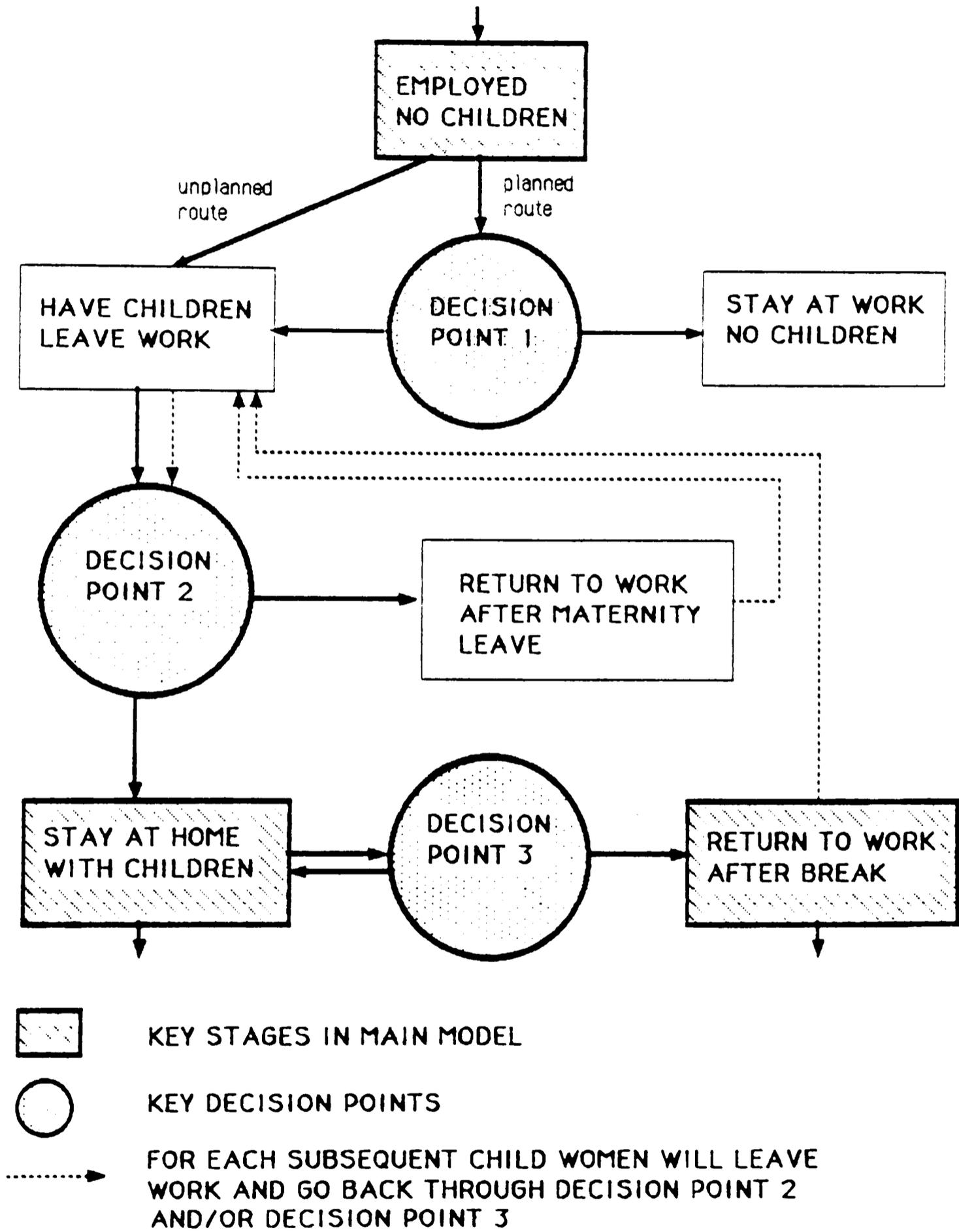
Decision point 1 represents a woman's choice between not having children and remaining in employment, or having a child and leaving. It is therefore primarily family oriented as the focus of the decision is on whether or not to have a child - the decision regarding work basically follows on from that. If a woman does decide to have a child, and therefore leave work, she will have to decide (decision point 2) whther to take maternity leave or a longer break. The focus of this decision is therefore more work oriented. If she stays at home with her child (or children), at some stage she will probably think about returning to work (decision point 3). It is always possible, although increasingly unlikely today, that she will choose to remain at home - hence the arrow going back to that box. A woman who has returned to work after maternity leave or after a longer break, might once again leave to have another child. This is represented on the model by the dotted lines.

The consequences of the decision to work, and, in particular, the decision to return to the labour market after a break for children, have frequently been considered. However, the way in which this decision is made has received scant attention.

1.6 DECISION-MAKING THEORY AND MODELS OF DECISION-MAKING

The term 'decision' can be defined in a number of ways. Cohen and Christensen (1970) separate out several aspects of the term, and produce four categories:-

1) An end-product, i.e. the actual decision as such;

2) The act of deciding rather than the decision itself;

3) The processes, including the conscious and non-conscious weighing of pros and cons, which precede and lead to the act of deciding, and

4) which includes 1-3.

The decision to return to work includes all aspects of decision-making, from the early processes through the act of deciding to the decision itself. However, the third definition fits in best with the focus of this work, because it appears to encompass the 'how' of decision-making, although as Cohen and Christensen (1970) point out, people are not usually aware of how they arrive at a decision. This might therefore be expected to make research into decision-making rather difficult.

Edwards (1967) distinguishes between two types of, what he terms, dynamic decision-making - i.e. the decision processes that occur in changing situations and are characteristic of real life. These are :-

1) where the environment is unchanging, but the decision-maker's information changes as a result of successive decisions, other events or both, and

2) where the environment changes its characteristics while the

decision-maker is obtaining information about it.

The latter, he suggests, is little studied because of its complexity. The decision to return to work is certainly one where the environment is changing while the decision-maker is attempting to obtain information and, indeed, it can be argued that it is precisely this changing environment that makes women's return to the labour market so difficult. It is also the case that even where the environment is changing (as in 2), the information available to the decision-maker - i.e. the potential woman returner - is likely to change as a result of successive decisions, other events, or both (as in 1). It would seem, then, that the type of decision under consideration here is particularly complex and may not be amenable to analysis through traditional decision theory.

Decision-making theory as a specific area of study grew out of Edward's seminal work in the 1950's. He proposed that the models used for rational decision-making in economics could usefully be applied to human decision-making. However, in the context of important life choices, decision theory appears rather limited. It tends to ignore both the social context of human judgments and the presence and impact of affect in human choice behaviour (Allison, Jordan & Yeatts, 1992). Most research looks to the current situation, rather than the past experiences of the decider, for the variables that control the decision, and it tends to use mathematical ideas to specify what individuals **should** do rather than describing what they **do** do. It also assumes that people behave rationally, and their decisions will be based on the concept of maximum utility (Edwards and Tversky, 1967). Many studies

deal with repeated events rather than unique ones (Yates, 1990), and tend to focus on monetary gains or losses in specific risk taking situations such as gambling (e.g. Levin, Chapman & Johnson, 1988).

However, in real life, decision-making situations tend to be far more complex. Indeed, for adults, reality can be seen as one of the main factors that limit rationality in decision making (Biela, Chlewinski and Walesa, 1983). Real life decisions are often subject to a whole host of constraints and pressures, including those made by others in the individual decision-maker's circle. Decisions, therefore, can frequently involve more than one person (Wendt, 1983), and can be affected by an individual's

> "......identification with occupational and family
> roles and with their sense of responsibility for
> others" (Biela, Chlewinski and Walesa, 1983).

Sloan (1987) looks at major life decisions from a very different point of view to that of the cognitive theorist. Using an interpretive approach, he takes into consideration the fact that each individual making a decision is embedded in "social, cultural, interpersonal and historical contexts". He argues that many of the cognitive models of decision-making ignore the **meaning** that the decision has for the individual. His approach was to look at the experiences of a number of individuals who had taken, or were in the process of taking, major life decisions, and attempt to understand and describe those experiences "through the application and development of interpretive categories or concepts".

If an economic-type model were considered in relation to the return to work, it might be conceived of solely in terms of the weighing up and comparing of various factors in a quasi-mathematical way. On the other hand, approaches such as Sloan's (above) might focus on the meaning of decision-making, but ignore the balancing of costs and benefits. In this thesis, there is an attempt to bring together these two approaches by looking not only at at the costs and benefits involved, but also at their **meaning**. By incorporating meaning into the model, decision-making can be seen within the context of a changing environment in which women balance out the negative stressful aspects against the meaningful benefits. In effect, what is being balanced is the meaning that the situation has for the women.

The costs and benefits involved in the decision-making processes are therefore looked at in terms of the stresses and satisfactions experienced by the women. These stresses and satisfactions need to be considered at the identified stages in women's career/child-rearing histories, and are pertinent not just in terms of current and past experiences, but also in relation to the future. The anticipation of stresses and benefits at a later stage could well be based on inaccurate assumptions. It is therefore important to consider how women in the first two stages of the model - ie pre-break women working full-time, without children, and those women in the career break who are currently at home with children - view the prospect of returning to work post-career break.

1.7 THE STRESSES AND SATISFACTIONS OF DIFFERENT LIFE STAGES

It is postulated that the weighing up of costs and benefits involved in the decision-making processes can be enhanced by incorporating a 'meaning' element though looking at the stresses and satisfactions that women experience at the identified life stages. The three stages (pre-break, break and post-break) are therefore considered within this context, below.

1) EMPLOYED WOMEN WITHOUT CHILDREN

Although a majority of women do want children, an increasing minority are making the decision to remain childless (Richardson, 1993). However, the women under consideration in this stage are employed women, without children, who anticipate having children at some point in the future. Given these considerations, it is perhaps not surprising that little research exists specifically on this population, although newly-married, childless couples have been included in research comparing stress for couples across different stages in the family life cycle. As expected, findings indicate that parents experience more work/family pressures than nonparents (Lewis and Cooper 1987).

Schnittger and Bird (1990) suggest that dual-career couples in this pre-child stage are often engaged in in negotiating and re-negotiating spousal and professional roles, and have less need than at later stages to limit career involvement. They also see this stage as characterised by a more equal division of household

work. Job flexibility for the woman at this stage is not, therefore, particularly important. However, anticipation of parenthood and future lifestyles may well influence career choice and structure in the present. For example, Rexroat and Shehan (1987) found that young women who anticipated being employed at age 35 were more likely to fulfill their expectations and less likely to have their work negatively affected by family events, in comparison to young women who expected to be homemakers when they reached their thirties.

2) MOTHERS AT HOME

Although an increasing number of women with dependent children are in paid employment (Social Trends, 1991), it is still a common pattern for many women to remain at home for a few years while their children are below school age. It is therefore important to look at the benefits and stresses associated with this stage. Oakley's research (1974) attempted to analyse the homemaker role as a working role, parallel to that of an employed person. Her findings suggest that many women are dissatisfied with the role, and find it depressing, boring and monotonous. It is interesting that these are the very characteristics of unskilled labour that have been found to be particularly stressful in the context of male waged labour (Doyal,1990). It could be, though, that Oakley's findings are partly a reflection of the 1960's and 70's culture. However, Sharpe (1984) also argues that while motherhood is traditionally viewed as the fulfilment of womanhood, this is contradicted by the experiences of many women who find it far from satisfying. In interviews with 'full-time' mothers, she

reports that despite the rewards of motherhood, many of the women felt frustrated and increasingly isolated, the longer they remained at home. She quotes Marilyn, a careworker, with two children, living in Newcastle:

"I think isolation is why you get so many women sitting at the doctor's. They go up saying, 'I'm depressed' and there's nobody there to say, well, you're isolated, you need more than the stimulation of a 3-year old and your husband coming home tired who doesn't want to talk. I can remember when I was in the house constantly, and that wait for the key in the door, and the flood of conversation that used to come from me immediately before he'd even taken his coat off".

Another woman, Angie, a non-working mother with three children, reported similar experiences:

"I think a lot of women now, they all want to go to work because they all feel like me, feel like they're chained in and life's passing them by, without going out and doing something and talking........".

Unlike Oakley (1974), the great majority of people do not view the homemaker as a worker in the same sense as a paid employee. Homemakers, it is argued, lack both social and economic status (Berk, 1985). The job requires no special qualifications; it is unpaid and generally undertaken by women. As a consequence, it is not perceived as having much intrinsic value in the outside world

(Sharpe, 1984). Indeed, it has been argued that the fact that it is unpaid demeans it, and sets it apart from most other work done by adults (Doyal, 1990). Doyal goes on to suggest that this can result in lowered self esteem and self worth, as well as affecting women in more material ways by, for instance, reinforcing their economic depenedence on others.

Although technological innovation this century has changed the lives of women working in the home, there is little evidence that it has led to a reduction in the number of hours spent on housework (Vanek, 1974; Meissner, Humphreys, Meis & Scheu, 1975). Doyal (1990) puts forward a number of convincing arguments that highlight the hazards of housework for women. It is, she suggests, a paradoxical activity, in that whilst it is usually undertaken in isolation from other adults, when combined with childcare, it offers little opportunity for solitude. Because housework tends only to be noticed when it has not been done, there is also little opportunity for positive reinforcement. It is open-ended in that there is no obvious end to the working day, and, it is argued, the structure of the job offers no opportunity for growth or advancement and few chances of wider social recognition for achievment.

Boulton (1983) studied a group of fifty mothers who were looking after young children at home, and suggested that it was appropriate to look at their roles as mothers from two different perspectives: the first was the women's more immediate response to the task of looking after their children, and the second was the sense of meaning and purpose that they experienced in their lives

as mothers. Four different types of motherhood experiences were generated by adopting this dual approach:

1) Fulfilled - this referred to the situation in which women experienced both a strong sense of meaning in their roles as mothers, and also enjoyed the day to day experience of childcare.

2) Alienated - this was the opposite of 1, and involved a weak sense of meaning and an irritation with the immediate situation of childcare.

3) Satisfied - in this situation the immediate response was of enjoyment, but the sense of meaning and purpose was lacking.

4) In Conflict - This was the reverse of 3, and referred to a situation in which the sense of purpose was strong, but the response to the daily routine of childcare was irritation.

Boulton found that, of the 50 mothers in her sample, 19 were 'fulfilled', 5 'satisfied', 10 'in conflict' and 16 'alienated'. There was a difference in terms of class, with more middle class mothers feeling that 'childcare monopolized their lives and made them feel a loss of individuality' (Boulton 1983), while the working class mothers emphasised the conflict between housework and childcare. The evidence, then, does seem to suggest that while there are satisfactions in the role, for many women, being at home with children can be hazardous to mental health.

3) STRESSES AND SATISFACTIONS OF THE EMPLOYED MOTHER

Many studies have been undertaken which have focused on the stresses and benefits for women in the homemaker role, as compared to those for mothers in paid employment (Weaver and Holmes, 1975; Arvey and Gross, 1977; Barnett, 1982; Weaver and Matthews, 1990). Researchers have focused on variables such as job satisfaction (Kessler and McRae, 1982), family situation (Pleck, 1979; Muller, 1986), social class (Parry, 1986; Parry and Shapiro, 1986), husband's participation in household chores (Meissner et al., 1975; Ferber, 1982; Fox and Nickols, 1983; Robinson, 1988; Darling-Fisher and Tiedje, 1990), income (Steil and Weltman, 1991) and career orientation (Townsend and Gurin, 1981). Findings have often been contradictory (Rosenfield, 1989; Shelton, 1990; Arber,1991), although the majority of results tend to indicate that, despite problems, the employed mother enjoys better mental health than the homemaker (Ferree, 1976; Gove and Geerken, 1977; Wright, 1978; Freudiger, 1983; Gove and Peterson, 1980; Glick, 1989; Coombs, 1991).

However, such comparisons can be confusing. Repetti, Matthews and Waldron (1989) point out that many studies concerned with employment and women's health are beset with methodological problems that make it difficult to distinguish between the effects of health on employment and the effects of employment on health. They suggest that an alternative interpretation of the findings that favour the working woman might be that healthier women are

more likely to become employed and stay employed. This is supported by research showing that a woman's physical health influences whether or not she works (Kessler and McRae, 1982; Jennings, Mazaik and McKinlay, 1984). The situation, though, is clearly a complex one (Parry, 1987; Spitze, 1988), in which simplistic comparisons cannot be made. Nevertheless, Repetti et. al. conclude that while employment has both beneficial and harmful effects on women, the latter outweighs the former.

The terminology used, in which women are seen as either employees or homemakers, is perhaps misleading and suggests that working women do not have a homemaking role. The benefits of being employed can also be looked at in the context of women's role in the home. As part of a study of occupational stress and well-being, Kibria et. al. (1990) looked at the quality of the homemaking role for employed women, and found that it had many positive aspects when removed from its traditional social and familial context. In the rush to make comparisons between the two roles, this is an area that has received scant attention.

1.8 ROLE THEORY

Irrespective of whether employed women or homemakers enjoy better mental health, the fact is that many working mothers do report job/home interference (Pleck, Staines and Long, 1980) This experience has often been looked at in terms of role theory, where a role is seen as a set of specific behaviours which are expected of a person occupying a particular social position (Frone and Rice, 1987). Early research (e.g. Gross, Mason & McEachern, 1958)

focussed on the conflict between a woman's role as employee and her role within the family, the assumption being that it was the addition of another role that was responsible for any stress. The simple dual role hypothesis saw the combined roles of housewife and worker as **the** source of role conflict for the working woman. More recent research has taken into consideration the complexity of the situation, and focussed on some of the variables (see above) that might contribute towards the experience of conflict. The terminology has also been somewhat modified - for example, the use of the generic term 'family' can hide conflicts involving different family roles such as that of spouse or parent (Frone and Rice, 1987), and most current research now takes this into account.

Research, then, has moved on since the introduction of the dual-role hypothesis, and it can now be seen as a rather naieve concept. However, in discarding it, one perhaps loses something of the power behind role theory. It has certainly been diffused with the advent of current research which focusses on the complex interactions between many different roles. Other models such as stage theory or the concept of transitions may be just as appropriate when considering the stresses and satisfactions that women experience in different aspects of their lives. Nevertheless, in considering the literature on women and work, it is very difficult to avoid talking about roles. Role theory is an extremely pervasive framework for introducing studies in this area, but, it could be argued, it has often been used to postulate post hoc explanations of findings, rather than in specific and more detailed ways to test out theories. Clearly, it is part of the

discourse on women and work, and as such, has to be taken into consideration.

1.9 SUMMARY AND AIMS

From looking at the literature, a number of issues would seem to be relevant to women, work and motherhood, and the Intoduction has put forward a model which combines an individual life cycle perspective with patterns of employment. Three key decision points have been identified within this new model. It is intended to explore these using a decision-making framework which combines economic-type models with those that incorporate meaning. To achieve this the research will focus on the stresses and satisfactions experienced by women at each of the stages identified in the model.

It is also intended to assess how accurate women are in their anticipated and retrospective assessments of the different stages, by comparing these with current experiences of stress and satisfaction. This relates particularly to post-break employment, for if women in the first two stages make inaccurate assumptions about the satisfactions and stresses associated with the third stage, this might well influence their decision to return. Although much research has been undertaken on the problems of the working woman, virtually nothing has been written on the way in which women make the decision to go back to work. The study aims to rectify this omission by focusing specifically on the decision making processes, primarily at this transition point but also at the earlier key decision points in the model.

It is predicted that the model developed here, by taking account of both the work role and the motherhood role, will be a useful tool with which to look at the different stages of women's career/child-rearing histories. In particular, it is hypothesised that the stage a woman is at in the life cycle will affect the stresses and satisfactions she experiences. Initially exploratory in nature, the main studies do not provide any categories, but by content analysis of qualitative data, aim to allow the women's own words to emerge. Issues that are important to the women themselves can then be looked at in greater detail. It is hoped to be able to identify and describe patterns of relationships in the data, and go on to generate relevant hypotheses. Findings from the preliminary research will therefore form the basis of more detailed hypotheses at a later stage in the thesis, although the work will still be primarily exploratory in nature.

CHAPTER 2   METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

2.0 EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

The thesis was primarily exploratory in nature and the research was based on field studies using a number of different survey and quasi-experimental techniques. Informal discussion groups and more formal interview methods were also employed, particularly in the early stages of the research. However, the main focus was on self report data gained through three questionnaire-based surveys employed in the three major studies - viz. a) the preliminary survey; b) the main survey, and c) the role conflict survey. Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered through these methods thus maintaining scientific rigour while not losing the subjective element essential to the nature of the enquiry. The qualitative data were quantified through the use of content analysis and then analysed using relatively simple, appropriate non-parametric tests. The quantitative data from two of the surveys were organised to allow comparison between specified groups of women which were then analysed using analysis of variance techniques (see Section 2.7).

The research was designed to highlight the stresses and satisfactions that women experience at different stages in their career/child-rearing histories. Through this, it was hoped to be able to clarify the decision-making processes that women use in moving from one stage to the next. Three main studies were employed to explore these issues:

The preliminary studies, consisting of the preliminary survey, the stress survey and a number of minor studies, were aimed at single, specific groups of women. Using one of the stages described in the

model, the preliminary survey (which made up the major portion of the preliminary work) was basically exploratory in nature, and focused on women during the career break - i.e. women who had given up paid employment and were at home with children.

The main survey was of a more complex nature. It was a 2-factorial mixed design - the first factor being 'group' and the second 'stage in career progression' - with three levels of each factor. 'Group' relates to three separate groups of women who were then surveyed at points in their careers/child-rearing histories to meet the experimental criteria of being both mothers and employees (pre-break, break and post-break). 'Stage' relates to their perceptions of these three different points. Each of the three groups of women described their current situation and were asked to look either forward to the next stages, back to the previous ones, or, in the case of those women at home with children, to look backward to the first stage and forward to the third. 'Group' is therefore between subjects, while 'stage' is within subjects.

The role conflict survey, which grew out of the findings of the preliminary research, focused on working women at stages 1 and 3 of the model. It was designed to explore a) the relationship between the experience of role conflict, and family and job demands; b) the relationship between role conflict and general well-being, and c) the dual role theory. It was based on a quasi-experimental, passive observational design (Cooke and Campbell, 1979), with two independent variables - job level and family commitment.

2.1 SAMPLING METHOD AND TARGET POPULATION

Because the focus was on both work and mothering roles, and the interaction between the two, it was necessary to collect data from very specific sub-populations. Access to these groups, in the most cost effective way, was constrained by the need to access the different groups at different times in their career/child-rearing histories. Therefore, it was decided to access the groups through national organizations, although it was recognised that this approach would serve to define the population under study. Different techniques, within the confines of sampling theory, were therefore employed for the different studies.

1) THE PRELIMINARY SURVEY

The first survey, which formed part of the preliminary research, used a form of stratified sampling. This is based on the need to pre-define those groups of people from whom representation is needed (Coolican, 1990). It therefore had the advantage of ensuring that the strata that were known to be important - in this case, women who had stopped work and were at home with children - were adequately represented (Zinser, 1984). Four branches of the National Housewives Register were randomly selected from within the local area, with the specific intention of gaining access to a middle-class sample. Following initial contact with group leaders, questionnaires were then distributed to all members in the identified groups. The procedure worked well in identifying the target group - i.e. women at stage 2 in the model, at home with children. However, this method did not identify those respondents in stages 1 and 3 - pre-break and

post-break - and women from all three stages would be needed for the main survey.

2) THE MAIN SURVEY

The aim of stratified sampling is to divide the population into non-overlapping groups to maximise the separation and internal homogeneity of the strata (Barnett, 1991), and this was felt to be an appropriate strategy for the main survey. The women targeted in the main survey were three distinct groups. Although the ideal would have been a longitudinal study, this was not possible due to research restrictions, and therefore three distinct groups were chosen, matched as far as was possible. These were 1) working women, without children, who intend to start a family at some point in the future; 2) women who have given up work to stay at home, temporarily, with children, and 3) women with children who have returned to work after a break.

Given that the focus was on women and motherhood, it was decided to use family planning clinics as the primary route of access for the main survey, and sample all women attending clinics over a period of approximately six weeks and within a specified geographical area. So that enough respondents were reached, a number of National Childbirth Trust classes in the area were also targeted.

Initially, an identified organisation was used to enable the researcher to make contact with the targeted groups. In the later stages however, the process could best seen as a form of post-statification sampling, or post-hoc stratification, as the sample members were

sorted into the identified strata **after** the sample had been selected (Jolliffe, 1986), thus allowing variables measured during the survey to be used as stratifying variables. However, the fact remains that because of the time constraints of carrying out either longitudinal research or a pure cross-sequential survey, different samples of women were targeted at the three identified life stages (see section 2.0), as opposed to the same group being studied as they passed through those stages. It was, therefore, important to ensure that there was equivalence of groups.

3) THE ROLE CONFLICT SURVEY

Sampling in the third survey involved a similar strategy in that questionnaires were sent out to a random sample within a national agency. However, this agency was the civil service. Hence the population was not the same as in the previous surveys. The strategy also involved a form of post hoc stratification, but this time from a target population of working women. The sample was divided post hoc into six groups groups according to the variables of family commitment and job level.

2.2 SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

The research, at all stages of the project, involved questionnaire-based surveys. Questionnaires can be described quite simply as instruments for gathering structured information from people (Coolican, 1990), but to do this successfully they need to be designed very specifically to suit the aims of the particular research being undertaken (Courtenay, 1978).

All the questionnaires required certain basic information such as age of respondent, number and age of any dependent children, current and/or previous employment details and, if applicable, occupational status of partner. The wording of these questions and those of a similar nature, was fairly straightforward, with care being taken to ensure clarity and simplicity where possible. The form of the required response was clearly specified, for example with regard to age (how old are you? ....yrs.). Responses could be easily coded, and several pre-categorised coding frames were developed for the purpose. Other questions required a simple 'YES/NO' response. For instance, 'Have you worked since the birth of your first child?'; 'Are you currently employed?'. If the respondent answered in the affirmative, further information was often asked for in the following way: 'If 'YES', please give details'. These contingency questions were very clearly set out with specific directions so as to minimise any possible misunderstanding or confusion.

Respondents in the preliminary and the main surveys were also asked to list all their educational qualifications in a free respose method. This was later scaled by the researcher, although it was difficult to incorporate a wide range of qualifications into a scale made up of different levels, with each level being able to stand independently - ie. it would only be necessary to use one code to categorise a subject's response, however many or few their qualifications. A 9-category scale was eventually constructed which ranged from no qualifications at one end to PhD + Fellowship, at the other. This was then used to categorise all responses.

SCALES

Visual analogue scales were used to measure the levels of stress and satisfaction, anticipated, currently experienced and retrospectively assessed, at each reporting stage. The scale consisted of a line, 100 mm long, which the respondent was asked to mark at an appropriate point. One end represented no stress or satisfaction at all and the other was an expression of extreme stress or total satisfaction. A quantitative measure of stress and satisfaction could therefore be obtained, by measuring the marks made using a standard ruler. Initially these scales had been marked with 0 at one end and 100 at the other, similar to the 100-point 'thermometer' scale described by Sudman & Bradburn (1983), but as a result of piloting the main survey (see Chapter 4) this procedure was modified and the scales were left numerically unmarked.

The visual analogue scale was also used in the third survey, but in a slightly different way. Respondents were asked to indicate which roles they occupied from a number of roles set out in the questionnaire. Each time they responded positively, they were required to put a mark on the scale to indicate how demanding they found that particular role. The scale went from 'not demanding' at one end, to 'extremely demanding' at the other. Space was given to respondents to fill in any other roles they felt were applicable to them, and to complete a corresponding scale. The questionnaire also included a number of questions relating specifically to role conflict, in which respondents were asked to put forward those roles that they felt may be in conflict. They were then required to indicate how problematic those roles were, again on a visual analogue scale. Clear

examples were given at the beginning of each section, so as to ensure a good understanding of exactly what was required.

A more tightly defined scale was also felt to be appropriate for some of the questions in the third survey, and Likert-type scales were therefore used to look at factors associated with the women's employment. Respondents were required to indicate whether they agreed strongly, agreed slightly, neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed slightly or disagreed strongly to a number of statements associated with the work situation.

All questionnaires included a space for coding.

The layout of the three main survey instruments used in the research is described below. All other survey instruments are described in the relevant chapters.

1) THE PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire (see Appendix) was divided into three sections:

SECTION A

This section was comprised of a series of questions designed to provide background information such as age, number of dependent children, educational qualifications and husband's occupation.

SECTION B

The information requested in this section could be placed into three different categories:

1) The first part was related primarily to previous work experience, but also established whether the women had left work specifically to have children.

2) This section was concerned with satisfaction and enjoyment in both the home and work environment, and the main factors that the women felt had contributed to this. A visual analogue scale was used to measure the level of enjoyment, with 0 standing for no satisfaction and enjoyment at all and 100 being an expression of total satisfaction and enjoyment.

3) The final part, and the most comprehensive in this section, related to attitudes towards future employment and possible training/advice requirements. The women were asked what sort of work they would like to do if they did not return to a similar field of employment. They were also asked what benefits they expected to get out of working again, and what they thought would be the attitudes of their husband/close family, friends and ex-colleagues (if applicable), to their return to work. Information on anticipated problems due to the necessity for further training and/or career advice was also requested.

The final page of the questionnaire consisted of just one question asking the women if they would like to make any further comments.

This qualitative feedback was analysed, and is included in the results section.

A subsidiary questionnaire developed by the Centre for Occupational Health at Nottingham (Cox, Thirlaway, Gotts and Cox, 1983) was used to measure 'general well-being' to see if this provided further information (see Appendix for details). This followed the main body of the questionnaire (described above).

2) THE MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE

Because the questionnaire, (see Appendix) was designed to obtain information from different groups of women, it was set out in a modular form (see Table 2.1, overleaf) so as to allow the women to work their way through the sections, filling in only those that were relevant to their particular situation. Various statements filtering out respondents into the relevant sections were therefore employed. All the women were asked to provide demographic details at thebeginning of the questionnaire, and to complete section A. Open and closed questions and visual analogue scales were used.

SECTION A

This section was concerned with the subject's educational background, their current work status and their present, or, if applicable, previous employment details. They were also asked if they had taken an employment break at any time, and if so, for how long. Information on the satisfactions and stresses of the work situation (either past or present) was obtained by the use of visual analogue

DIAGRAM 2.1
FLOW CHART SHOWING SUBJECTS' PROGRESS THROUGH
QUESTIONNAIRE
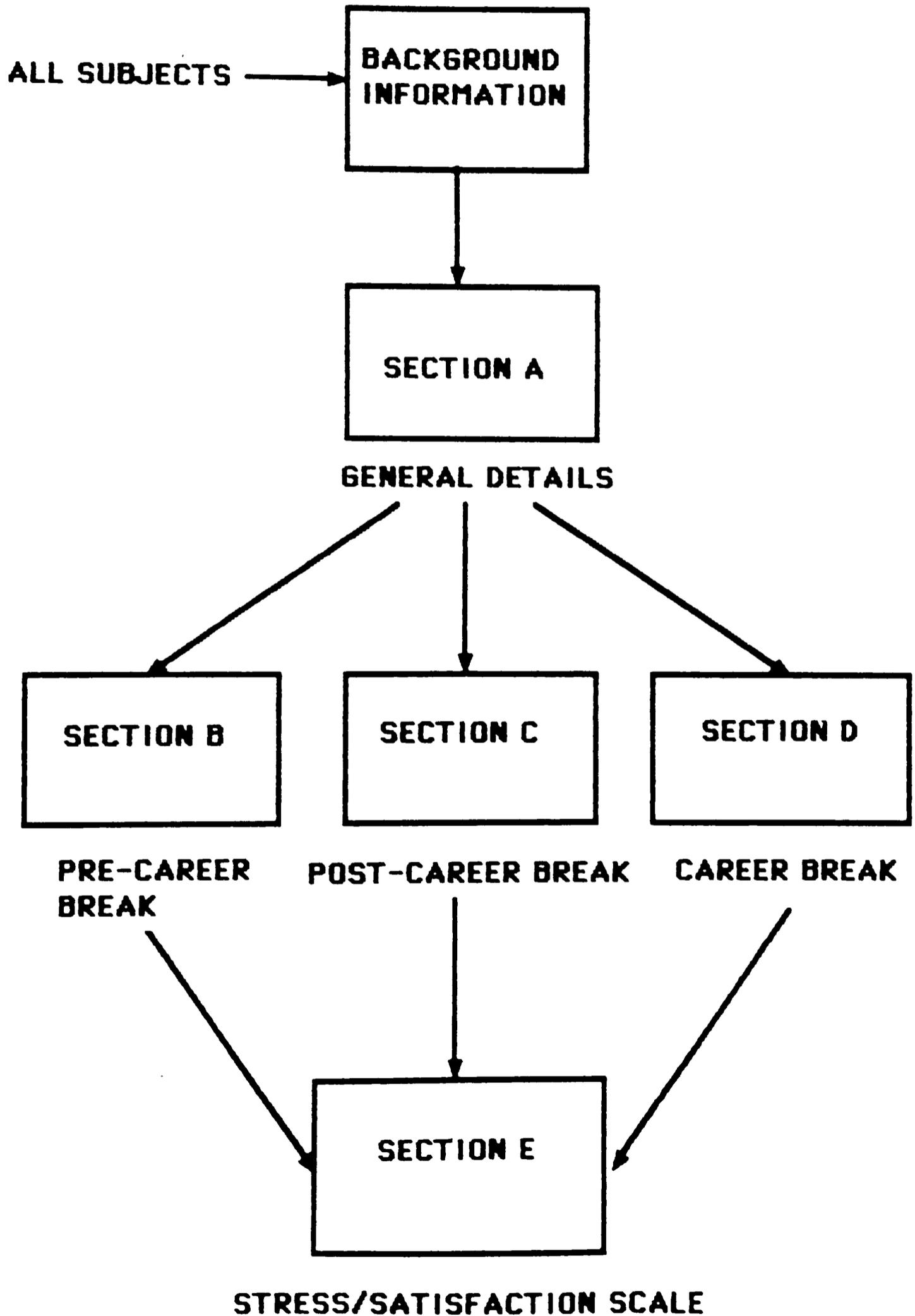
scales. The factors contributing to their perceived satisfaction or stress were also requested through the use of open-ended questions.

SECTION B

The women were asked to complete this section only if they did not have any children. If they were mothers, they were directed to Section C. The first question in Section B was aimed at finding out whether they had any plans to start a family in the future. Those women who did not plan to start a family were asked to turn to section E. If, however, they answered in the affirmative, they were asked if they would expect to (a) take maternity leave, or (b) be away from work for a much longer period of time. The remaining questions in this section related to their expectations of being at home at home with children and, if planned, their return to employment after a career break. It was intended to establish what sort of problems (if any) the women anticipated encountering in these two situations.

SECTION C

This section was aimed at working mothers who had returned to employment after a break for children. Using open-ended questions, it attempted to draw out their feelings about their current situation and the problems, if any, they encountered in their role as working mothers. They were also asked about the difficulty or ease with which they had made the move back into employment, and the expectations they had held prior to their return.

Visual analogue scales were used to measure 1) the satisfactions and

2) the stresses they had encountered in being at home with their child/children before returning to work, and they were asked to name the factors that had contributed to this. Information on the job they had been doing prior to having children was requested, as well as an indication of the satisfactions and stresses involved, again by the use of visual analogue scales.

SECTION D

This section was relevant to those women who were at home with children. It was concerned with the satisfactions and stresses they encountered in their current situation and the factors involved in this. If they had worked since the birth of their first child, employment details were asked for, as well as information on the return to work and the problems, if any, of being a working mother. They were then asked if they would like to return to work in the foreseeable future and what benefits and problems they anticipated with this course of action. The satisfactions and stresses associated with a return to work were measured on a visual analogue scale. Finally, the women were asked if there was any help, information or training that they thought would be of particular use to them before returning to work.

SECTION E

All respondents were requested to complete this section which comprised 2 questions. They were asked to make an overall judgement of their present situation in terms of stress and satisfaction. The visual analogue scale was marked so as to assess whether satisfaction and benefits outweighed stresses and problems or vice

versa, with 'extremely satisfying' at one end and 'extremely stressful' at the other. A mark in the middle indicated a situation that was neither stressful nor satisfying. The factors contributing to this were also requested.

3) THE ROLE CONFLICT QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire comprised seven sections:

1) This section covered personal details and provided data from which the variables of family commitment and job level were derived.

2) Section two consisted of a checklist of the number of roles adhered to, and a visual analogue scale to assess how demanding each role was considered to be by the respondent.

3) Section three measured role conflict, and, again, used visual analogue scales to measure the extent to which each conflict was seen as problematic.

4) Section four focussed specifically on the problems associated with being both a mother and a worker. An open ended question was included for the respondent to provide details of such problems.

5 & 6 These sections consisted of Likert type attitude scales designed to measure the problems and benefits arising from work. Their development grew out of, and was similar to, the scales used in the previous two surveys.

7) Section 7 consisted of the General Well-Being Questionnaire (Cox and Gotts 1987. See Appendix).

2.3 QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT

The procedures used to develop all three questionnaires were identical, and conformed to what is 'good methodological practice' as described in detail in the following sections. Diagram 2.2 illustrates these procedures by showing the various stages involved. Starting from the research model and a sound knowledge base, the researcher progresses to the main stage box where planning, appearance and structure, question format and wording, and content are developed. During this stage, it is important for the researcher to *talk* with members of the target population to help shape and clarify emerging ideas, and to establish their validity. These *talks* may be carried out with individuals or groups, but must have some open-ended component. Both individual and group talks were used during the current research (see Chapter 3, Method Section 3.1).

When these issues have been decided upon, a draft copy of the questionnaire can then be piloted. The next stage is crucial, and highlights the 'design loop' involved in this process. If changes are not required (and this would be unlikely first time round), then the researcher can 'exit to next stage' of the survey. However, it is probable that certain modifications would have to be made, and the new knowledge obtained as a consequence of this would feed back into the existing knowledge base and objectives. The whole process would then be repeated, and continue to be repeated until no further changes were required.

DIAGRAM 2.2   FLOW DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING STAGES IN
QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN
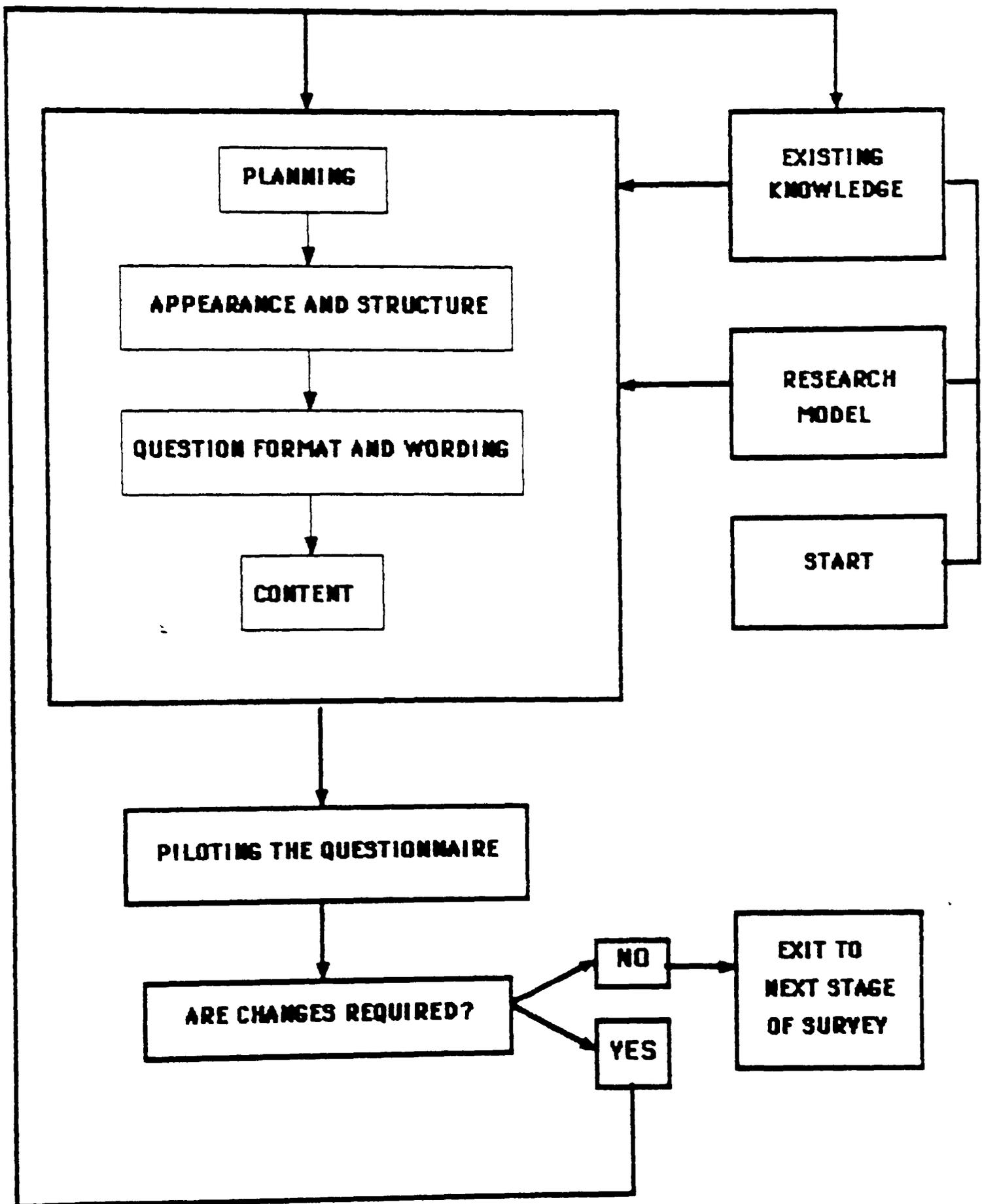
PLANNING

The importance of planning, at all different stages in the development of a questionnaire, has been stressed by many researchers (Youngman, 1979; Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987; Oppenheim,1992). The treatment of different types of non-responses, for instance, and the way in which the various questions are going to be analysed, needs to be taken into consideration during its development. In particular, where open-ended questions are planned, the measures used for coding the subsequent responses have to be incorporated into the early stages of planning (Walker, 1978). Methods of analysis were therefore decided on during the design of the preliminary questionnaire, although coding frames could not be developed until the responses were received (see Section 2.6 on analysis and the development of coding frames).

APPEARANCE AND STRUCTURE

Attention needs to be paid to the presentation of any questionnaire as the way in which it is set out, and the order of both the sections and the questions, can significantly affect the response (Goode & Hatt, 1957), reduce errors and increase motivation (Sudman & Bradburn, 1983). Easy, introductory questions were therefore given at the beginning as a 'warming-up' exercise with which to engage respondents without taxing or threatening them (Smith, 1975). The main, more complicated questions, which often involved respondents having to think about the stresses and satisfactions associated with different situations, then followed. Appearance is usually the first feature of the questionnaire to which the recipient reacts (Youngman, 1979), and a lot of effort was put into making all the survey

instruments appealing to the respondent, as the attractiveness or otherwise of a questionnaire can make all the difference to the recipient's motivation to fill it in and return it (Oppenheim, 1992).

This issue was relevant even during the early stages of design, when it became apparent that there was a potential conflict between length of questionnaire, and size of typeface and amount of spacing. The latter needed to be at an optimal level to facilitate both completion and analysis. If the questionnaire was overlong, respondents might be deterred from filling it in. The final draft of all questionnaires took these factors into consideration by repeatedly testing out a number of different variations in informal and more formal, 'trial runs' of the questionnaires.

The layout of the questionnaire is also important in helping respondents to accurately interpret instructions, and the front page was felt to be particularly useful in this respect. For example, a brief sentence at the top of the first page in the main questionnaire explained what the research was about, and went on to direct women to the appropriate sections given their individual circumstances. They were reminded that some sections would not be relevant to them, and requested to carry on to the next question if there were some questions they could not answer, or thought were not applicable.

QUESTION FORMAT AND WORDING

The better constructed the question, the more reliable the questionnaire is likely to be (Wright & Fowler, 1986). In fact, question wording has been described as one of the biggest problems in

survey research (Smith, 1975), and the literature on this issue is extensive (see for example, Moser & Kalton, 1971; Courtenay, 1978; Oppenheim, 1992). The function of a question is to elicit a particular communication with a minimum of distortion (Oppenheim, 1992), and question wording and format are clearly crucial when the researcher is not around to explain or clarify any misunderstandings. Where possible, language should be simple, jargon free and should try to avoid the use of unnecessary technical terms. This was not felt to be a problem with the questionnaires under consideration here, as the issues pertained to the women's everyday experiences and lifestyle. However, oversimplification can also be problematic, leading to lowered motivation in the respondent (Smith, 1975). Primarily then, language should be congruent with the discourse of the audience, and every attempt was made to achieve this.

In all the questionnaires, wording was looked at very carefully, and all questions were initially checked for ambiguity of meaning and ambiguity within the text. This was done first by the researcher, and then informally by other researchers. Colloquial usage of words was also checked, and any questions which might influence the direction of the response were removed. It was also necessary to ensure that questions were sufficiently specific (Moser and Kalton, 1971) and not easily open to misinterpretation, and again, this was checked informally during the early stages, and throughout the development of the questionnaire.

OPEN AND CLOSED QUESTIONS

Open-ended questions are useful because they are a source of rich information. They give respondents the freedom to say what they really think in their own words, rather than being forced into preconceived answers (Coolican, 1990), thus allowing them to express feelings, motives or behaviours quite spontaneously (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). This was particularly relevant in this study where questions were asked that required the individual to recall and evaluate past experiences and to anticipate future ones. Paradoxically though, open-ended questions need to have a very clear frame of reference. For example, the questionnaires contained several open questions in which respondents were asked to write down factors associated with a specific situation. After completing the visual analogue scales on satisfaction and stress, the women were asked to list the factors that they felt had contributed to the various levels of satisfaction or stress they had indicated. In the third survey, respondents who indicated that they did experience some conflict between the roles of mother and worker, were then asked to give specific details. Other questions that took this form related to decision-making. For instance, 'What were your main reasons for deciding to return to work?' The responses were consequently very varied, and ranged from one or two words in some cases, to detailed accounts in others. Open-ended questions demand more time, thought and perhaps more motivation from respondents since they are required to get across their ideas without the help of preset, structured responses (Smith, 1975). These questions naturally fell towards the end of each section, following on from the more structured questions on each topic - a format which tied in well with

Sudmon & Bradburn's (1983) advice that self-administered questionnaires should never start with open-ended questions. As the questionnaire was not particularly long, there were not thought to be any major motivational effects.

Closed questions can be defined as structured questions with clear-cut response options (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). They restrict the choice of response by forcing respondents into given alternatives. For example, 'Did you leave work specifically to have children?'; 'Have you worked since the birth of your first child?' are questions that require a 'YES' or 'NO' response only. 'Are you: a) at home or b) at work?'; 'Do you work a) full-time or b) part-time?' are also examples of closed questions - what Jacobs (1970) refers to as two-way questions - and , as in a number of other instances, the limited choice of response was exactly what was required.

ETHICAL CONCERNS

Issues of anonymity and confidentiality are clearly important to would-be respondents. A separate section was therefore included on the front page explaining that it would not be possible to identify individuals from the questionnaire data. They were also asked to indicate whether they had any objection to the data being stored anonymously and analysed on computer.

2.4 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE SURVEY METHOD

As stated above, the great majority of the data was collected by means of a series of questionnaire-based surveys, and while this was felt to be the most appropriate method for the research, it clearly has both advantages and disadvantages The strengths and weaknesses of questionnaires have been much discussed in the literature (for example, see Smith, 1975; Youngman, 1979; Rogers, 1988; Oppenheim, 1992), and it is therefore important to look at some of these issues in detail. The questionnaire can be seen as a self administered interview or survey (Smith, 1975; Dane, 1990), and as such raises a number of very specific problems.

Because of the nature of the instrument, the questionnaire can only include questions that can be answered with the help of the written instructions provided (Rogers, 1988) - the researcher is not available to explain or elaborate and there is, therefore, an increased possibility that items will be misunderstood or left incomplete (Dane, 1990). Neither is there an opportunity for the researcher to probe further. The answers have to be accepted as final, and ambiguous or inconsistent responses cannot be clarified. A considerable amount of time was therefore spent on the language used as well as on the format, design and layout of both questions and instructions (see Section 2.3 on questionnaire development).

Many of the questions, particularly in the first two surveys, were open ended, and allowed respondents to take their time and state their views in their own way. They produce fuller and 'deeper' replies (Bradburn, 1983) which can give a more rounded picture of the

respondents' attitudes on complex issues. It has also been argued (Oppenheim, 1992), that open-ended questions provide a more genuine and valid response with a high degree of face validity. Nevertheless, while qualitative data might yield more realistic information and are therefore held to be more valid in this respect, they are likely to be less reliable (Coolican, 1990). Inter-rater reliability was therefore sought.

A questionnaire can be seen as impersonal, and it could be argued that probing questions or ones that required a lot of thought from respondents (e.g. what stresses/satisfactions do you anticipate in returning to work after a break for children?) might have got a better response if there was some encouragement on hand. Because the researcher has no control over the respondent's environment, there is no guarantee that the 'right' person will complete the questionnaire. Again, it was hoped that precise and clear instructions would limit this occurence. For instance, the covering letter and instructions at the beginning of each questionnaire made it clear at whom the research was aimed — e.g. women who had previously worked full-time but were now at home with children, or women with children who had currently returned to work after a break for children. As the respondents went through the questionnaire, they were also asked specific questions about their status in relation to work and motherhood. Depending on the response, they were either encouraged to continue, directed to another part of the questionnaire or thanked for their help in completing the forms so far.

Another weakness of the questionnaire is the fact that it is easier to ignore a request that is read, alone, in the privacy of the home than it

is to say 'NO' to an interviewer in person. As Dane (1990) points out, the greater the distance, both physically and psychologically, between the maker of the request and the intended respondent, the more likelihood there is of that request being refused. A major problem with the questionnaire as a form of enquiry is therefore the typically low response rate. In an attempt to remedy this, questionnaires in the preliminary research were distributed and collected by group leaders from local branches of the National Housewives Register, having been filled in at meetings or taken home and completed. Apparently none of the group members had refused to fill in the questionnaire and all had been returned. It would, however, be unwise to suggest a 100% response rate. A large part of the effect may have been related to the distribution and collection of the questionnaires.

It was arranged for questionnaires in the main survey to be distributed by staff at local authority family planning clinics. However, problems arose in that staff were failing to hand out the questionnaires to women attending clinics (see Procedure Section in the Main Survey) When attempts were later made to collect unused questionnaires, many of the clinics could not find them, and had not (as previously agreed) kept a record of the numbers that had been given out. It was therefore impossible to obtain any percentage response rates and this is clearly problematic. Questionnaires in the third study were sent out to women working in civil service offices, randomly selected from the headquarters telephone directory of a civil service department. The response rate was 69%.

However, one of the strengths of the questionnaire method, where it can be seen to have an advantage over other forms of investigation, is

the standardization of format. The same standard questions and instructions, as well as a covering letter with an explanation of the research, can be sent out to the intended population, and this was done in all three surveys. Another major advantage that this form of enquiry has over, for example, the interview method is that it reduces biasing errors that could arise as a result of the personal characteristics of the interviewers and the variabilities in their skills (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987).

The postal questionnaire scores particularly well on efficiency (Dane, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). A considerable amount of information can be collected from a large sample, spread over a wide geographical area, within a short time period and at a relatively low cost. Comparable information for a large number of respondents can also be obtained, allowing the researcher to look for patterns in the data. Questionnaires have the advantage of greater anonymity – something that might be particularly useful when asking people personal and perhaps sensitive questions about specific aspects of their lives, although, as mentioned above, this could also be construed as a disadvantage.

Another benefit of the questionnaire method is that respondents are not 'put on the spot' and required to make an immediate response. It can therefore be useful in eliciting a considered, rather than an immediate answer to more complex questions that might demand some thought. Information covering a long time period can also be summarised in answer to a few questions. This was particularly important in these studies where anticipated and retrospective asssessments, as well as actual experiences were required.

2.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The use of a number of different approaches when looking at a problem has been termed 'triangulation' (Jenson & Jankowski, 1991), and is based on the idea that if a problem were positioned in the centre of a triangle, it could then be viewed with differing perspectives from its three corners or angles (Wright & Fowler, 1986). The assumption is that the weaknesses of each single method will be compensated by the counter-balancing strengths of another (Jick, 1979). According to Patton (1990), triangulation is an important way of strengthening study design and can be seen as increasing the overall validity and credibility of findings (Patton. 1990). The degree of overlap, or consensus, between points of view represents the reliability of a finding. It is particularly useful in increasing reliability where traditional psychometric forms (split half, Cronbachs alpha etc.) are not widely applicable. Denzin (1970) identifies four basic types of triangulation – data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation.

However, when applied to different studies, it does seem as though these categories become somewhat blurred. In relation to the current studies, the notion of triangulation will therefore be discussed, but it could be argued that the division that Denzin puts forward is not quite as clear-cut as the categories suggest. Triangulation can certainly be seen as an advance on straightforward cross-method comparisons, in that it implies at least three perspectives - or should do. Indeed, Denzin (1970) suggests that multilple methods should be used in every investigation. However, this is not always apparent in the

literature where studies employing two methods are sometimes described in these terms.

Different forms of triangulation were used in the three basic studies. Triangulation of approach was adopted in relation to the material: the literature was studied; groups of women were interviewed both on a formal and an informal basis, and a series of survey questionnaires were distributed and collected through several different channels. In the preliminary research, qualitative data was obtained from a number of studies asking the same questions in different ways.

The studies can also be seen as having used a form of methodological triangulation which Denzin (1970) describes as within-method triangulation. A single method, the survey questionnaire, was the primary mode of investigation, but within that method multiple strategies were used. So, for example, the main questionnaire included open questions aimed at eliciting unstructured, qualitative data, closed questions, and visual analogue scales. Different forms of questions and different types of data were also used to further unpack the areas of interest. Factual information relating, for instance, to marital status or educational qualifications, qualitative data on the stresses and satisfactions at diffferent stages in the work/motherhood cycle, and quantitative data from scales were thus obtained and subsequently analysed using a mixture of content and statistical analysis. This form of triangulation, in which different types of data provide cross-data validity checks, can be seen as increasing the overall validity and credibility of findings (Patton. 1990).

2.6 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Because many of the questions were open, it was felt to be more appropriate to use an inductive, rather than a deductive, system of coding – i.e. one which allows the data to be recorded with as much original detail as possible, and postpones categorization until later. (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987). The problem then arose of how to analyse, in a systematic way, the multiple answers thus generated. The series of techniques which were employed in order to achieve this can perhaps be seen as a simple form of content analysis.

According to Weber (1985) content analysis can usefully be used to code open-ended questions in surveys, and in this context it has the advantage of operating directly upon the transcripts of human communication. One of the main aims of content analysis is the classification of a text consisting of many words into much fewer content categories, each made up of one or more words. It is then assumed that units of text classified within the same category will have similar meanings.

Content analysis allows for the subjective element of the response to be studied within a structured framework, so that patterns in the data can be identified, coded and categorised (Patton, 1990). It is a method of asking questions about data in such a way as to produce countable results (Marshall & Rossman, 1989), and given the nature of the material under consideration here, it would have been extremely difficult to do this without such a framework. Holsti (1969) argues that because of the complexity of language, even a competent and insightful analyst would have great difficulty in making maximum use

of his data unless he employed systematic methods. Content analysis has been defined in many different ways (Berelson, 1952; Cartwright, 1953; Kerlinger, 1964; Krippendorff, 1980; Patton, 1990), but basically it can be said to refer to a technique, or series of techniques, used by a researcher in an attempt to make sense of some form of nonstructured communication, so that it can be studied in an ordered and scientific manner. Brewer and Hunter (1989) suggest that the term 'content analysis' broadly describes a heterogeneous domain of techniques which are focused upon the (more or less) systematic, objective, and quantitative description of a communication or series of communications.

There is some dispute over whether content analysis needs to be quantitative. On the one hand, it has been argued that this is essential (Lasswell, Lerner and Pool, 1952), while other theorists suggest that such restrictions can lead to increased precision, but at the cost of problem significance (Barcus, 1959). Krippendorff (1980) also sees the requirement to be 'quantitative' as restricting, and points to the success of qualitative methods as evidence. Weber (1985) takes a different viewpoint by suggesting that one of the major advantages of content analysis is its ability to combine both quantitative and qualitative operations. Similarly, Berelson (1952), makes the observation that 'there is no strict dichotomy between "qualitative" and "quantitative" analysis', and goes on to argue that much qualitative analysis is actually **quasi-quantitative**. Analysis of responses to the open questions under consideration here, can best be seen as coming under this heading.

DEVELOPMENT OF CODING FRAMES

Any 'open' technique requires its own classification scheme (Oppenheim, 1992), and it was therefore necessary to design coding frames in order for a systematic analysis of the data to be undertaken. The classification procedure in the study was accomplished in several stages (see Diagram 2.3 overleaf)

RAW DATA

SUBJECTS' RESPONSES
TO OPEN QUESTIONS

DIAGRAM 2.3

FLOW CHART ILLUSTRATING
PROGRESSION FROM RAW
DATA TO COMPLETED CODING
FRAME

SORT NO. 1

SORT DATA INTO
PILES DEPENDENT
ON THEMES

DEVELOPMENT OF
ROUGH
CATEGORIES

SORT NO. 2
SECOND SORTING TO
ESTABLISH
CATEGORY CONSISTENCY

AMENDED
CATEGORIES

'TRIAL RUN'
TEST ON A NUMBER
OF COMPLETED
QUESTIONNAIRES

FINAL
AMENDMENTS

CODING
FRAME
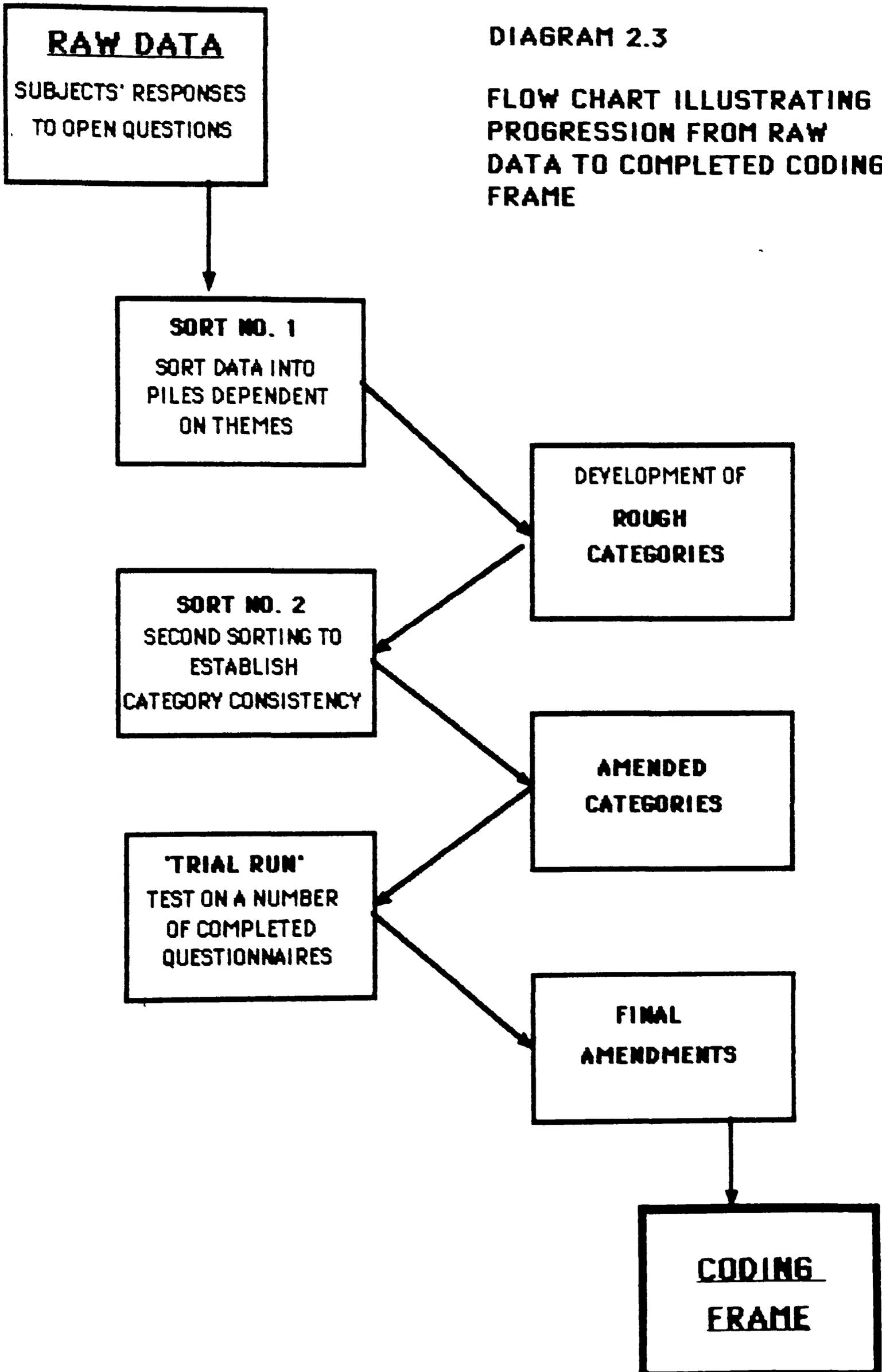
1) The first step in this procedure was to take the first 50 questionnaires and, looking at each free answer question in turn, write down all the responses to each one on sheets of paper. It was important, at this stage, to read through the responses several times in order to get a 'feel' for the data.

2) The next step involved the development of classificatory categories which would best reflect the data under consideration, without losing the essential nature of the communication. However, as Oppenheim (1992) argues, by imposing such categories 'on a very much larger and probably very varied set of responses, we are inevitably going to lose information.' It was therefore decided not to limit the number of categories at the outset, or to name them, but to wait and see what emerged after several 'sortings'.

At this point, it is useful to look at the concepts of manifest and latent content. Manifest content refers to the surface meaning of the text whereas latent content refers to the deeper layers of meaning embedded in the material (Holsti, 1969). Coding could therefore be made on the basis of the actual comments, in which case it would be manifest coding, or on the inferences drawn from responses - a process involving a certain degree of interpretation. This latter method can be classed as latent coding. In this instance, both manifest and latent coding were used, the former in the earlier stages, as suggested by Holsti (1969). Manifest coding was initially used to sort the responses into groups which were psychologically relevant, as they fell very clearly into different categories. However, where colloquialisms were used, it was necessary to move from manifest to latent coding, having decided in the earlier stages on

category headings drawn from the actual words.

Sorting the data involved writing down each response on a separate sheet of paper, and then sorting these into piles depending on the content. It became apparent fairly quickly that there were certain themes, running through the responses, which could be identified in many cases by the inclusion of one or two specific words - i.e. manifest coding. For example, the word 'financial' appeared in a high proportion of responses and could therefore be easily categorised under one heading. However, this was not always the case, and classification often involved a certain degree of interpretation. In these cases, latent coding was employed. In a few cases this was dependent on reference to other answers given by the respondent.

As mentioned above, many of the categories were drawn from the respondents' own words. Self image, for example, was a term that many of the women used when referring to the benefits they associated with the work situation. It's lack was also commented on, explicitly, in relation to the stresses of being at home. Intellectual stimulation was another term that arose in this context. Where this happened frequently, the word, or phrase, was used as a category heading, and, using latent coding, it was not difficult to recognise a number of related issues that could be placed within the same category. For instance, responses such as 'I miss using my brain' and 'I'm not being stretched enough' were classified as lack of intellectual stimulation. A second sorting, using the same procedure, was then undertaken to ensure consistency.

3) The new coding frames were then 'tried out' by a number of colleagues on a second sample of completed questionnaires. Inter-rater reliability is usually acceptable if greater then 0.6, and in this case it was acceptably high. Following this, several further amendments were made in order to eliminate possible ambiguities, and to make clear what should and should not be included under specific categories. A further category for miscellaneous items was then added to take account of any responses which could not be easily fitted into the existing categories.

4) The coding frames were then ready for use. A spread sheet system was adopted, with a separate sheet for each question. The categories were marked across the top in columns, and the subject numbers down the side, so that each subject who had answered the question was assigned a line . As the response to each question was analysed, a tick was placed in the appropriate column. The number of responses falling into each category could then be easily identified when the coding was finished. The data was then appropriately coded for input onto the computer.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The reliability of the five most important categories or factors was tested during the preliminary research through a factor validation study. They were found to be important to the women in their decision-making processes, whereas, apart from one, the other factors included in the list were not seen as important.

2.7 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Much of the data in this thesis was collected using open-ended questions, with respondents being required, for example, to list the stresses and satisfactions associated with different life stages. These data were dealt with using content analysis which allowed the data to be coded and categorised.

The Chi-square is a non-parametric procedure (Burns & Dobson, 1981), generally used to make inferences when the data are categorical (Dane, 1990). It is an appropriate test to use on nominai data (Greene and D'Oliveira, 1982), and it was thus seen as an appropriate measure when analysing the active and passive response categories identified in the data from the Stress Survey.

The quantitative data in the thesis were dealt with in a number of different ways. Data on stress and satisfaction levels were collected using visual analogue scales, which could effectively be seen as generating interval data. The scores obtained could therefore be appropriately measured by parametric tests.

Analysis of variance is one of the more common analyses used to detect differences among groups and variation between populations (Dane, 1990). A one-way anova (related) is used when one variable is tested under two or more conditions, and the same or matched subjects are used for all experimental conditions (Greene and D'Oliveira, 1982). The three matched groups in the main survey were therefore tested for equivalence by using a one-way anova on each of a number of different variables. The groups were found to be broadly

equivalent in many important respects, other than age. An analysis of covariance was therefore used to look at the differences between the groups on measures of stress and satisfaction and the differences between stress and satisfaction levels at the three reporting stages, taking out age as a factor. Analysis of variance requires homogeneity of variance in the different cells, and this was looked for and generally found to be acceptable in the cases under consideration here.

Two-way anovas are used when two variables are tested with two or more conditions for each variable, and different subjects are used for each of the conditions (Greene and D'Oliveira, 1982). They were therefore appropriate for much of the quantitative data collected in the third survey, where the differences between women in either managerial/professional jobs or administrative/secretarial jobs, with varying degrees of family commitment, were looked at in relation to a number of different variables.

Quantitative data was also explored using correlational statistics. Correlations can be said to measure the extent to which the changes in one variable are associated with changes in the other (Dane, 1990). The Pearson Correlation is a parametric test which measures the amount and significance of a correlation between people's scores on on two variables. It was used in the third survey to examine the relationship between total role conflict and general well-being, number of roles and total role conflict, and between total role conflict and total role demand. It was also used in the main survey to look at the association between length of time away from work and accuracy in anticipating the problems of returning.

The student t-test, or one-way anova, is a parametric test for one independent variable. The unrelated t-test is used when there are two experimental conditions with different subjects, and is useful in comparing the means from two samples (Wright & Fowler, 1986). The results indicate to what extent the samples need to differ in order to reject the null hypothesis (Coolican, 1990). A large value of t signifies a marked difference between the sample means and, correspondingly, a low probability that the samples vary purely by chance (Miller, 1984). It was therefore used in the preliminary research to compare two subsamples of women in terms of their scores on the two general well-being factors.

2.8 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This chapter reviewed some of the methodological issues involved in carrying out the research, relating particularly to the use of a specific study paradigm - i.e. questionnaire-based surveys. Sampling methods were discussed, and the target populations in each of the studies, identified. The chapter outlined the development of the survey instruments and considered their strenghts and weaknesses. The procedures involved in content analysis were explored in detail, and the statistical techniques for analysis of the quantitative data were also outlined.

CHAPTER 3 PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

3.0 INTRODUCTION - SURVEY 1

This preliminary survey focused on married women, at home with children, who were not in paid employment at the time of data collection. The focus was therefore on decision point 3 in the model - the return to work. The aim of the study, which was basically exploratory in nature, was to draw out the women's attitudes to, and experiences of, both their home and their previous employment. The decision-making processes were therefore explored in terms of the stresses and satisfactions that the women experienced in these different environments. A major focus of the study was the anticipation of future employment, post-career break, and this was further explored in terms of the cognitive processes that women go through in making the decision to return to work. Results were discussed as relevant points were raised, but the major points are considered in the discussion (Chapter 6).

3.1 METHOD

The Method section looks at the population and sample and the measures used, and goes on to describe the pilot study.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

As described in Chapter 2, a form of stratified sampling was used. The questionnaire was filled in by 152 women, mainly in the Nottinghamshire area, who had been contacted primarily through local branches of the National Housewives Register. The NHR is a group of women meeting regularly in each other's houses with the idea of

providing a stimulating forum for discussion. Other means of contact were pre-school playgroups and mother and toddler groups. Only married women with children, currently living with their husbands, were included in the sample. Those who were working either full or part-time, or had done so since the birth of their last child, were excluded.

Out of the 152 women who responded, 29 were involved in some form of paid employment and 9 returned questionnaires that were not fully completed, thus leaving 114. Of these, 77 questionnaires had been distributed by group leaders and returned later by post, while the remaining 37 were completed at group meetings. It is difficult to comment on the response rate, as in the latter condition no-one refused to fill in the questionnaire. However, in the former condition the number of questionnaires sent out was based on the estimate given by group leaders, and it was therefore up to these women to distribute, collect and return them. Although in several cases this took some time, there was no suggestion that any of the women had been unwilling to provide the information. Indeed, much of the feedback was extremely favourable, and several requests were received for further information on the issues raised by the questionnaire.

The 114 women who made up the sample were aged between 22 and 43 (mean 33.5; mode 35; SD = 4.3). All were married women, with children, currently living with their husbands. The number of children ranged from 1 to 5 (mean 2.1; mode 2), by far the largest group being those women with 2 dependent children (67%). All the women had husbands currently in employment, and 89% of these men came under

the category of professional or managerial. 69% of the women were educated to 'A' level standard or higher, and 32% to degree level. They were primarily then a middle class group. This was probably a reflection of the sampling process, but also, perhaps, of the model in that more middle class women might fall into this group.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

At the time of data collection, none of the women were in employment, either full or part-time, and none had worked since the birth of their last child. However, all had been working prior to this, and 105 (92%), had left work specifically to have children. Of the remaining 9, 8 had left because of their husband's job relocation. The women had been in their last job for a mean of 5 years (mode 2; SD = 3.5), and had left that job approximately 6 years ago (mean 6; mode 5; range, under 1yr. to 16yrs. SD = 3.5). 55% had been working in a professional/managerial capacity, although there was a far greater concentration in certain occupations than was the case for their spouses. For example, 16% of the women were teachers, 19% secretaries and 20% in clerical or related posts.

The sample was therefore composed of predominantly middle-class, well-educated, married women with children, currently living with their husbands all of whom were in employment at the time of data collection. However, none of the women were working, and had not done so since the birth of their last child, although all had been employed prior to this.

MEASURES

The survey was based primarily on a 33-item questionnaire (see Chapter 3 & Appendix) designed to draw out the feelings and attitudes of married women who, at the time, were looking after young children at home. It was intended to find out how these women viewed their current situation, their experience of work prior to the career break and, in particular, the prospect of returning to some form of paid employment outside the home.

A subsidiary questionnaire developed by the Centre for Occupational Health at Nottingham (Cox et al, 1983) was used to measure 'general well-being' to see if this provided further information (see Appendix for details). This was presented together with the main questionnaire.

PILOTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In piloting the first draft of the questionnaire, a mixture of group and individual interviews were employed. Respondents in both categories were then encouraged to have an open discussion following completion of the questionnaire, thus ensuring that no important feedback was lost. Several women were later asked to fill in a questionnaire on their own but, as expected, their comments and/or criticisms were not as forthcoming and therefore not as useful in helping to develop the questionnaire proper.

Furthermore, after each woman had been asked to complete a questionnaire on her own, the time taken to do this was noted, and when the whole group had finished, any problems that they had

encountered were discussed. In the three sessions organised along these lines, a lively discussion followed which contributed considerably towards the final draft of the questionnaire. For instance, it was realised that a more precise definition of the terms 'working' and 'not working' would have to be provided, as questions arose over whether such issues as part-time employment, voluntary work or attendance of a specific course constituted inclusion in one category rather than the other.

At this stage a number of questions were left open so as not to lose the essential nature of many of the responses. Final analysis of the pilot study provided support for this decision.

PROCEDURE

The questionnaires proper were distributed to the women at meetings of the National Housewives Register. Approximately a third were filled in at the time, and collected at the end of the meeting by the researcher. The remainder were completed by the women at home, and collected and returned by group leaders. In both cases subjects were asked to fill the forms in on their own, and leave any discussion until later. All questionnaires had a final section asking the women if there were any further comments they would like to make. The data was then collated and analysed using a number of different methods (see Results)

3.2 RESULTS

SOURCES OF SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION WITH HOME AND WORK

1) HOME

Subjects were asked to mark an appropriate point on a visual analogue scale between 0 and 100 to indicate how much satisfaction and enjoyment they derived from being at home with children. All 114 responded with a wide range of values from 25 to 100, where 0 was equal to no satisfaction or enjoyment at all, and 100 represented total satisfaction and enjoyment (mode 90, although this was only put forward by 6 of the 114 women; mean 74; SD = 18.1). They were then asked what they thought were the main factors that contributed to the particular level of satisfaction that they had indicated.

Their responses were categorised under three headings: 1) Fulfilment of Motherhood Role - this referred to the women's involvement in, and enjoyment of, the mothering role; 2) Control/Time issues, referring to the extent to which women felt themselves to be in control of their own time, so as to enable them to do what they wanted when they wanted - ie. their degree of personal flexibility, and 3) Social Interaction which related to their social involvement with others.

The major source of satisfaction was the Fulfilment of Motherhood Role. Apart from using this phrase directly, women mentioned aspects such as "contact with, and love from, the children"; "watching the children grow up and learn" and "being needed by the children", and

these were also included in the category. However, 27% of the sample did put forward Control/Time Issues. Placed under this heading were comments such as "time to pursue my own interests"; "I can organise the day to suit myself" and "being my own boss gives me time for me". Social Interaction was only seen as an important factor by 9 of the women.

TABLE 3.1

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SATISFACTION AT HOME		
Factors	Numbers	%
Fulfilment of Motherhood Role	96	84%
Control/Time Issues	31	27%
Social Interaction	9	8%

Further analysis of the questionnaire showed that there were a wide range of problems that women associated with being at home (see Table 3.2), and many of the respondents put forward several factors that they saw as being important sources of stress.

TABLE 3.2

MAIN PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING AT HOME		
Problems	Numbers	%
Lack of Social Interaction	54	47%
Financial Disadvantages	44	39%
Frustration of Repetitive Routine	44	39%
Lack of Intellectual Stimulation	38	33%
Lack of Control/Time Constraints	26	23%
Low Status	21	18%
Low Self Image	18	16%

The numbers in each category indicate that the problems listed were more evenly spread than the factors contributing to satisfaction at home, as set out in the previous table. It is interesting to note that while the positive nature of Social Interaction was only mentioned by 8% of the sample, the lack of it was put forward by 47%. "The lack of adult company" was an issue raised by many of the women, as was "isolation", "loss of contact with colleagues" and the difficulty of "meeting new people". Control/Time issues also raised an interesting point, in that while 31 women (27%) saw this as a factor contributing to their satisfaction at home, 26 (23%) saw it as a signicant stressor. In the latter category comments included: "I'm resentful of the lack of time for myself" and "constant demands from the family take up all my time". However, seven women saw both the positive and

negative aspects of the issue, and therefore 'scored' in each group. Having excluded these, this left a sample of 24 women who listed Control/Time issues as a contributory element in their level of home satisfaction, and 19 who viewed it negatively. These groups will be compared on other responses later in the chapter.

2) WORK

When asked to mark on the scale how much satisfaction they had got out of working, the women responded with scores ranging from 1 to 100 (mean 69.1; SD = 20.5). A list of the factors that they saw as contributing to this is set out below:

TABLE 3.3

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ENJOYMENT AT WORK		
Factors	Numbers	%
Job Satisfaction	71	62%
Social Interaction	66	58%
Intellectual Stimulation	31	27%
Self Image	25	22%
Financial Benefits	15	13%
Control/Time Issues	10	9%

Examples of Job Satisfaction included: "a lot of job satisfaction";

"doing a satisfying and rewarding job" and "I liked the job I was doing". Placed in the Social Interaction category were responses such as: "I enjoyed my contacts with people from all walks of life"; "mixing with people", and "meeting new people". Women's responses to the question also included: "intellectually stimulating" and "a challenging job that really made me use my brain" and these were put under the Intellectual Stimulation heading. The Self Image category included: "made me feel good about myself" and "boosted my self image", while "the money was good"; "the financial benefits" and "financially rewarding" clearly fell into Financial Benefits. An example of Control/Time issues (only seen as contributing to satisfaction at work by 9% of the women) was "I really appreciated the autonomy and flexibility I had with regard to time - within reason, I was able to plan my own timetable".

There was a wider range of factors related to the work situation than was identified in the home situation. However, two of these factors are the same: Control/Time issues and Social Interaction. Control/Time issues was seen by 27% of women as a factor contributing to their satisfaction at home, but by only 9% when looking at their work environment. This can perhaps be explained in terms of locus of control. Those women who were at home were in effect self-employed and thus more in control than the women at work, who were all employees. The far higher response (58% compared to 8%) in the work-related Social Interaction category is probably a simple reflection of the fact that women are more likely to be in contact with a greater number of people when they are at work.

The women were also asked what they would expect to get out of working again, and of the 96% who answered, the majority put forward several factors all of which appear to be relevant to a considerable proportion of the sample.

TABLE 3.4

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF FUTURE EMPLOYMENT		
Expected Benefits	Numbers	%
Self Image	54	50%
Financial Benefits	53	49%
Intellectual Stimulation	42	39%
Social Interaction	37	34%
Job Satisfaction	34	31%

In comparison to the factors that had contributed to satisfaction in their previous employment, there appears to be a radical change when the women project ahead. Self image more than doubled (from 22% to 50%), Financial Benefits went from 13% to 49%, and Intellectual Stimulation also increased from 27% to 39%. It could be that it is these factors that women particularly miss when at home, and they therefore place more importance on them when looking to the future. Social Interaction and Job Satisfaction were not seen as being so important - only 34% and 31% respectively identified them as contributory positive factors compared to 58% and 62% of those

talking about prior work experience. Fulfilment of the Motherhood Role can perhaps be seen as the equivalent of Job satisfaction for women at home. Given that 84% of them had seen the former as contributing to their satisfaction there, it might be that future job satisfaction in a different environment begins to lose its appeal. However, when comparing the Social Interaction responses, the decrease when women are looking ahead is rather strange, particularly if one considers that only 8% of women identified it as a factor contributing to their satisfaction at home.

RETURNING TO WORK

When asked whether they had thought about going back to work, 85% of the women said "YES" and 15% "NO". Of the latter group, 94% put forward reasons for their answer and these were placed in the following categories:

TABLE 3.5

REASONS FOR NOT HAVING THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK	
Reasons	Numbers
Fulfilment of motherhood Role	8
Dependent Children	7
Anticipation of Role Conflict/Overload	1

For those women whose responses fell into the Fulfilment of Motherhood Role, it would seem that they were quite happy with their current position and had not projected ahead at all. Seven women put forward dependent children as a reason for not having thought about returning, and one cited possible role conflict/overload. However, the great majority (85%), stated that they would like to return to work in the foreseeable future, and several different factors emerged as relevant to them when thinking about returning. These are set out in Table 3.6, below.

TABLE 3.6

REASONS FOR HAVING THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING		
Reasons	Numbers	%
Financial Benefits	51	45%
Intellectual Stimulation	34	30%
Self Image	26	23%
Decreasing Family Dependence	20	18%
Social Interaction	12	11%
Job Satisfaction	10	9%
Frustration of Repetitive Routine	4	3.5%

Similar numbers of women put forward Financial Benefits and Intellectual Stimulation as both an anticipated benefit of future employment and a reason for returning to work. However, while Self

Image, Social Interaction and Job Satisfaction were seen to be important factors by many of the women when looking ahead, (50%, 34% & 31% respectively), they were not so frequently identified by the women (23%, 11% & 9%) when asked to give reasons for having thought about returning to work. Other reasons put forward by the women included Decreasing Family Dependence and the Frustration of a Repetitive Routine (See Table 3.6 above).

The women were also asked when they would like to go back, and when they thought it would be possible to do so. The design was such that this question should have been answered in terms of number of years. The answers were, in fact, more illuminating, and could be seen as important aspects of the women's decision-making processes. For instance, 50% and 43% respectively replied that they would consider returning to paid employmment when their youngest child started school. Another factor that was put forward was the extent to which going back to work would fit in with existing home commitments, particularly in terms of the time constraints involved (10% and 16%). However, 35% of the women did reply in terms of a time scale, but this often coincided with specific events in their children's educational development. For example, in looking at the data it became apparent that many women, as in the previous category, were contemplating returning to work when all their offspring were in full-time primary education, even though this was not stated explicitly. Starting nursery school or going on to secondary ecucation were also mentioned as milestones which would then release women into the labour market.

RETURNING TO SIMILAR EMPLOYMENT

52% of the sample answered in the affirmative when asked if they would like to go back to the sort of job they had before, although 59% anticipated problems in returning. This included 8 women who, while not answering "YES" to the question, nevertheless expressed an opinion on the issue. As can be seen from Table 3.7 (below), over a third (39%) of the women realised that they were operating against a changing background - i.e. changing technology - and were anticipating this in their decision-making processes.

TABLE 3.7

PROBLEMS ANTICIPATED IN RETURNING TO SIMILAR EMPLOYMENT		
Problems	Numbers	% of those answering
Role Conflict	40	60%
Changing Technology	26	39%
Time Constraints	17	25%
Lack of Confidence	9	13%
Status	7	10%
Age	5	7%

ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT

There were 53 women who did not intend returning to a familiar field of employment. When asked what sort of work they would like to do, 83% of the 48 who responded to the question, answered in terms of some sort of change of direction - many simply specifying the need for an occupational change in the hope of achieving greater job satisfaction. The need for flexibility in the work situation, so as to fit in with family commitments, was stressed by 8%, and 4% indicated that their future employment plans would be dependent on further qualifications. 4% of the women stated that they did not want to take up any form of paid employment outside the home.

Given these facts, many of the women expected to have to undergo some sort of training in the future, and indeed this was borne out by their answers in the next section (see below).

TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS

70% of the women stated that they could foresee problems in actually getting the sort of job they wanted, whether or not that involved returning to similar employment, and 74% expected to have to undertake some form of training before going back to work. However, 96% of the sample said they would be prepared to do this. When asked to specify what form this might take, 56% mentioned new qualifications/skills and 43% anticipated the need for a refresher course. 72 women indicated that there was a particular form of help that would be of use to them, and 68 went on to give details.

TABLE 3.8

SPECIFIC HELP REQUIRED		
Specified help	Numbers	% answering
Refresher Course	20	29%
New Qualifications/Skills	24	35%
Careers Advice	17	25%
Assertiveness Training	6	9%
Job Application/Interview Skills	1	1.5%

RETURNING TO WORK

Of the 114 women in the sample, only 9 did not see any problems in returning to work. Of those that did, a high proportion (75%) put forward Role Conflict/Overload as the main factor.

TABLE 3.9

MAIN PROBLEMS ANTICIPATED IN RETURNING TO WORK		
Problems	Numbers	% answering
Role Conflict/Overload	79	75%
Time Constraints	26	25%
Lack of Confidence	17	16%
Changing Technology	15	14%
Age	7	7%
Status	7	7%

Responses did not differ much to those of the anticipated problems of returning to similar employment (see Table 3.7) except in one respect. 39% of the women anticipated Changing Technology as a problem when returning to similar employment, but only 14% saw this as a problem in thinking more generally about the return to work. This is not really surprising given that the former were comparing an environment they knew with one that, perhaps, several years ahead, they expected to have changed considerably. Respondents to the more general question

were not necessarily making that comparison.

ATTITUDES OF SIGNIFICANT OTHERS, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES

The attitudes of husband and close family to a woman's suggested return to work were predominantly supportive, with 68 (i.e. 60% of those answering) replying positively. However, the remaining 45 responses were quite varied, and could be divided into several distinct categories. An attempt was made to establish the attitudes of friends, and also of ex-colleagues where applicable. 108 of the women responded to the question relating to friends, but only 14 to that on colleagues. Although it looks as though 80% of women expected wholehearted or conditional support, this may well be a reflection of the middle class sample.

TABLE 3.10

ATTITUDES			
Categories	Husband/Close Family	Friends	Colleagues
	No. %	No. %	No. %
Supportive	68 60%	68 63%	7 50%
Negative	11 10%	3 3%	- -
Conflicting	9 8%	9 8%	4 29%
Conditional	22 20%	2 2%	2 14%
Irrelevant	2 2%	12 11%	- -
Expectations	1 1%	14 13%	1 7%

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Of the 111 women who answered the question on salary, 66 (59.5%) stated that money would be an important consideration in their decision to return to work. However, further qualifying comments, taken together with other more explicit information provided earlier on in the questionnaire, suggest that in many cases this was related more to the idea of economic independence than to any pressing financial need.

3.3 RESULTS FROM THE GENERAL WELL-BEING QUESTIONNAIRE

Tables 3.11 and 3.12, below, illustrate the general well-being of the study sample. Overall, the women reported experiencing fewer symptoms of tenseness (Factor 2), but slightly more of feeling 'worn out' (Factor 1), than the norm. By and large, the normative data refers to the population of working women.

TABLE 3.11

GENERAL WELL-BEING SCORES		
	Factor 1 'Worn Out'	Factor 2 Tense or 'Uptight'
Mean	19.1	8.6
Mode	23	8
Median	19	8
Range	28	25
SD	5.3	5
Norms for females		
Mean	17.4	12.8
SD	8.6	7.4

Looked at from a different perspective (Table 3.12), one in seven or eight women were showing signs of poor health in relation to fatigue, but less than 1% were reporting any level of problem with regard to feeling tense and uptight.

TABLE 3.12

MEASURE OF HEALTH USING GENERAL WELL-BEING SCORES				
Scale	Possible score	Category	% of sample in each category for both factors	
			GWF1	GWF2
Never	0 - 12	Very Healthy	11.4%	83.3%
Rarely	13 -24	Relatively Healthy	75.4%	15.8%
Sometimes	25 - 36	Poor Health	13.2%	0.9%
Often	37 - 48	Bad Health	-	-

The issue of time was an important factor for the women and came up in their responses to several different questions (see Tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7 and 3.9) Control/Time Issues, in particular, raised a number of issues that warranted further analysis.

3.4 CONTROL/TIME ISSUES

Control/Time Issues refers to the extent to which the women viewed time, and the degree of control they had over it, as contributory factors in their appraisal of the work/home situation and their perceptions of, and attitudes towards, returning to paid employment. For example, typical phrases relating to the factors that they felt had contributed to their level of satisfaction at home included such comments as "having control over my own time"; "I can do what I want when I want - I'm my own boss", and "freedom from clockwatching". Conversely, many women described the "constant demands from the family" as taking up all their time, and saw this as one of the major problems associated with being at home (see Coding frame in Appendix for further examples). It was interesting to note, then, that while 27% of the sample saw this factor as contributing to their satisfaction at home, 23% saw it as a significant problem. It was therefore decided to compare these two groups on their responses to the General Well-being questionnaire. 24 women had listed control/time issues as a contributory element in their level of home satisfaction, and 19 had viewed it as a problem. Statistical analysis using a Students T test (independent groups) was used to compare these two groups in terms of their scores on the two General Well-being factors (GWF1 and GWF2). The results indicate that women who report control/time issues as problems at home were

significantly more 'worn-out', but no more tense or 'uptight' than women who saw these issues as a benefit.

This result could be explained in three different ways. Firstly, seeing time as a problem could lead to feeling 'worn-out'. Secondly, feeling 'worn-out' could result in seeing time as a problem, or thirdly, there is another factor, good time management skills, which drives both. Informal discussion with respondents leads the author to favour the latter suggestion. The hypothesis is that those women who can employ good time management skills, see the freedom to organise their time as a benefit, and at the same time do not feel worn-out, while those who do not possess this ability, see it as a problem. This is illustrated in Figure 3.13, overleaf. The issue can be considered in terms of the transactional model of stress developed by Cox and colleagues (Cox, 1978; 1985; 1987; Cox and Mackay, 1981; Cox, Thirlaway, Gotts and Cox, 1983).

THE TRANSACTIONAL MODEL

According to this, stress is an individual perceptual phenomenon, essentially psychological in nature. It can be described as:

>"part of a complex and dynamic system of
>transaction between the person and his
>environment." (Cox, 1978)

Basically stress results from an imbalance between an individual's perception of the demands made on them (both external and internal) and their perceived capacity, in terms of abilities and resources,

FIGURE 3.13 CONTROL/TIME ISSUES
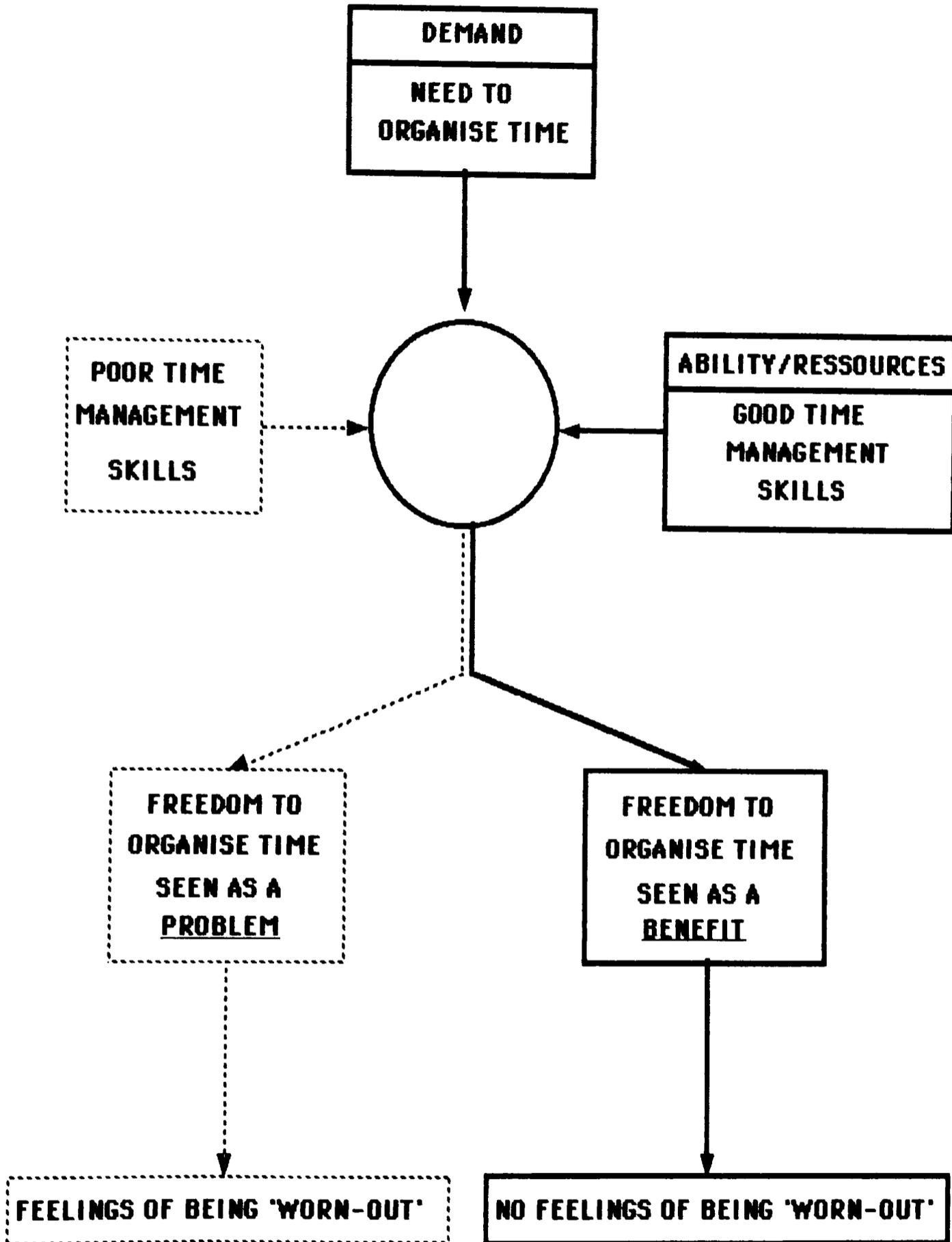
to cope with those demands. The constraints of the situation and the degree of support available also need to be taken into account. When there is an imbalance in the system, the individual experiences stress, with a consequent lowering of his state of well-being.

Figure 3.13 focuses specifically on two aspects of this model, demands and abilities, where demand is seen as the need to organise time, and ability is seen in terms of good time management skills. It is argued that demand will be perceived positively when the individual possesses these skills. Consequently, those who could do this reported fewer feeling of being 'worn-out', but no effect on anxiety or tension, as measured by the General Well-being questionnaire (Cox et al. 1983).

It could also be argued that the ability to employ good time management skills is affected by the constraints faced by the women and the degree of support they receive. Although these issues were not addressed directly in the questionnaire, the women were asked to anticpate the attitudes of their husband and close family to their suggested return to work.

Out of the 24 women who saw time issues as a benefit, 18 felt that their husbands/close families would be supportive if they returned to work. The remaining six thought that this support would be conditional:

> "It would be alright in theory, but in practice
> he wouldn't do much."

" He'd be happy enough as long as I made all the
child-care arrangements and didn't ask him to
do any more."

The responses were more varied among the 19 women who viewed time issues as a problem. Five stated categorically that their husbands would not be supportive, nine came under the category of conditional and two put forward conflicting responses e.g.

" My husband would be supportive, but my
parents would be horrified."

However, two women in this group thought their husbands would be supportive if they took up employment.

It can be seen, then, that for those women who viewed time issues as a benefit, a high proportion (75%) felt that they could rely on the support of their partners if they returned to work. This was the case for only two of the women who saw time issues as a problem. Support and control, then, are clearly important issues in terms of the decision-making processes.

3.5 THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

The data collected in the survey focuses specifically on Decision Point 3 in the original model put forward in the Introduction - i.e. the decision to return to work after a break for children. This can be looked at in terms of the decision-making model identified earlier (Introduction, Section 1.6) which incorporates meaning into a cost/benefit model of analysis. This particular model can be used to explain the factors identified by the study (see Fig. 3.14, overleaf). Although a number of factors have been listed, 5 appeared to have particular meaning for the women. These were:- job satisfaction, social interaction, intellectual stimulation, self image and financial benefits. These factors were later checked for reliability (See Factor Validation study, Section 3.6).

The model proposed suggests that decision-making reflects a balancing of the costs and benefits associated with being at home in relation to those associated with being at work. This is supported by the data. In this model, meaning is seen in terms of the stresses and satisfactions experienced by the women. In looking at the return to work for this group, the stresses and satisfactions are obviously the anticipated costs and benefits, and such anticipation will necessarily reflect prior experience. This places these decision-making processes squarely within a broad life-stage perspective (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3). When the benefits of work and the stresses of life at home outweigh the benefits of home and the stresses of work, the woman may decide to ' go back to work'. This decision may be made contingent upon timing, with a set of heuristics developed to identify points when appropriate actions can be taken: eg. "I wouldn't feel

JOB SATISFACTION
SOCIAL INTERACTION
INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION
SELF IMAGE
FINANCIAL BENEFITS

BENEFITS OF WORK

STRESS OF HOME

RETURNING TO WORK?
FACTORS INVOLVED IN
THE DECISION-MAKING
PROCESS

LACK OF SOCIAL INTERACTION
FINANCIAL DISADVANTAGES
FRUSTRATION OF REPETITIVE ROUTINE
LACK OF INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION
LACK OF CONTROL/TIME CONSTRAINTS
LOW STATUS
LOW SELF IMAGE

GO BACK
TO WORK

?

STAY AT HOME

FULFILMENT OF MOTHERHOOD ROLE
CONTROL/TIME ISSUES
SOCIAL INTERACTION

ROLE CONFLICT/OVERLOAD
TIME CONSTRAINTS
LACK OF CONFIDENCE
CHANGING TECHNOLOGY
AGE
STATUS

BENEFITS OF HOME

STRESS OF WORK

Figure 3.14

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happy about leaving him with a childminder until he was, well, at least, two"; "when I think my youngest is ready for nursery (age 3), I'll start looking around"; "I will start looking for a job when the children are both at school".

The decision to 'stay at home' is considerably affected by (a) 'fulfilment of motherhood role' and 'role conflict/overload', and (b) 'changing technology' and 'lack of confidence'. It could therefore be predicted that:

1) women will return to work when they feel that their motherhood role is no longer critical, and

2) that this process will be facilitated by re-training in technological and psychosocial skills (eg. WIT course, Cox & Swarbrick, 1987).

FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

The decision to return to work appears to be related primarily to decreasing family dependence, and to be time based. Various heuristics and decision criteria were identified: for example, returning to work when their children were settled into full-time education and their home commitments consequently lessened. However, virtually all the women in the sample viewed full, or at least, part-time employment as a natural progression from their present situation. 85% had thought about returning to work, and of the remaining 15% who had neither thought about going back nor contemplated doing so in the foreseeable future, only one did not intend returning at all.

A working model of this decision-making process has been proposed (see Chapter 1, Section 1.6) which emphasises the role of different life stages in providing the information base necessary for decision-making. In the present study, this related to three particular questions; these were:

1)   What were the main factors that contributed to your level of enjoyment at work?

2)   If you have thought about returning to work, can you say why?

3)   What would you expect to get out of working again?

Financial benefits, intellectual stimulation, self image, social interaction and job satisfaction were consistently among the most

frequently cited factors that ocurred across all three areas. Table 3.15 (overleaf) shows the extent to which levels of these same factors differed in response to the 3 questions. For instance, although only 15 women saw financial gain as a factor contributing to their level of enjoyment when they were actually working, 53 put this forward as an anticipated benefit of future employment. Similar results emerge if the issue of self image is examined, with 25 in the former category and 54 in the latter. Intellectual stimulation remains fairly constant across all three, although as with the previous two factors the highest 'score' was obtained on the third question, The anticipated benefits of future employment. Social interaction and job satisfaction, however, show a different pattern with the women viewing both these as major factors that contributed to their level of enjoyment at work, but ones which apparently have little influence on their reasons for thinking about returning.

TABLE 3.15	FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE DECISION TO RETURN TO WORK		
FACTORS	FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ENJOYMENT AT WORK	REASONS FOR HAVING THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK	ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF FUTURE EMPLOYMENT
FINANCIAL BENEFITS	15	51	53
INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION	31	34	42
SELF IMAGE	25	26	54
SOCIAL INTERACTION	66	12	37
JOB SATISFACTION	71	10	34

Five diagrams have been constructed which attempt to illustrate this pattern (see Diagrams 3.16 - 3.20, overleaf). The vertical axis refers to the number of times each factor was listed in response to the three different questions. Although no horizontal axis has been drawn in, time could be said to run across the bottom of each diagram, in that these responses were given in the context of three consecutive stages in the decision-making process.

Diagrams 3.16 - 3.20 illustrating the extent to which differing levels of the same factor emerged in response to the three questions.

Diagram 3.16
Financial Benefits

Diagram 3.17
Intellectual Stimulation

Diagram 3.18
Self Image

Diagram 3.19
Social Interaction

Diagram 3.20
Job Satisfaction
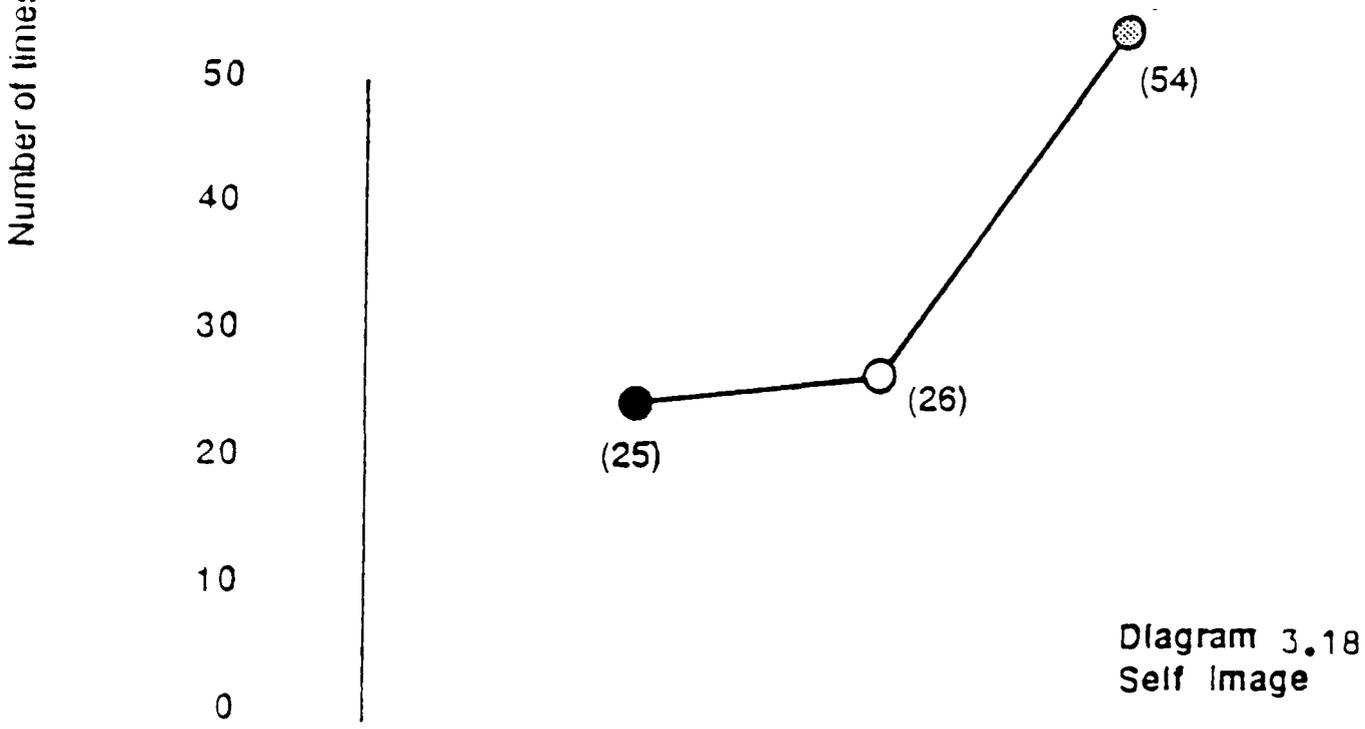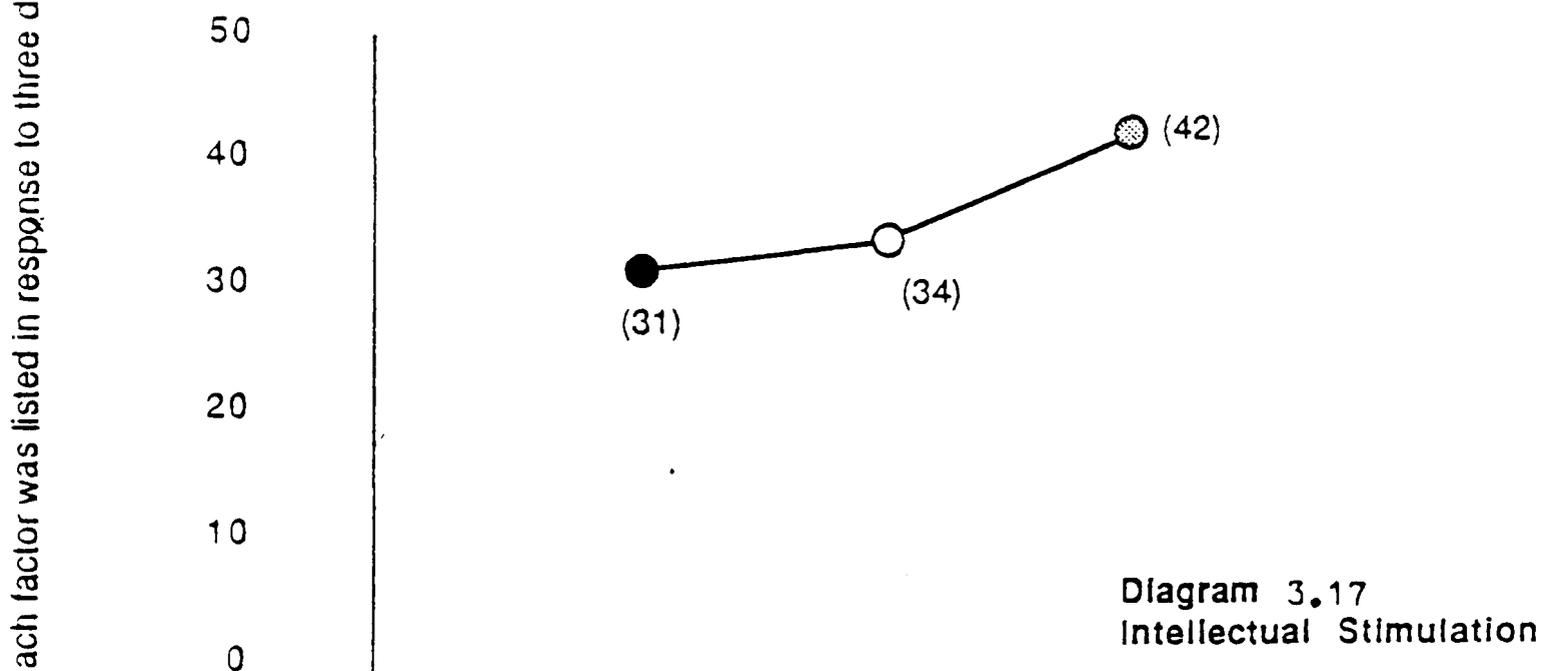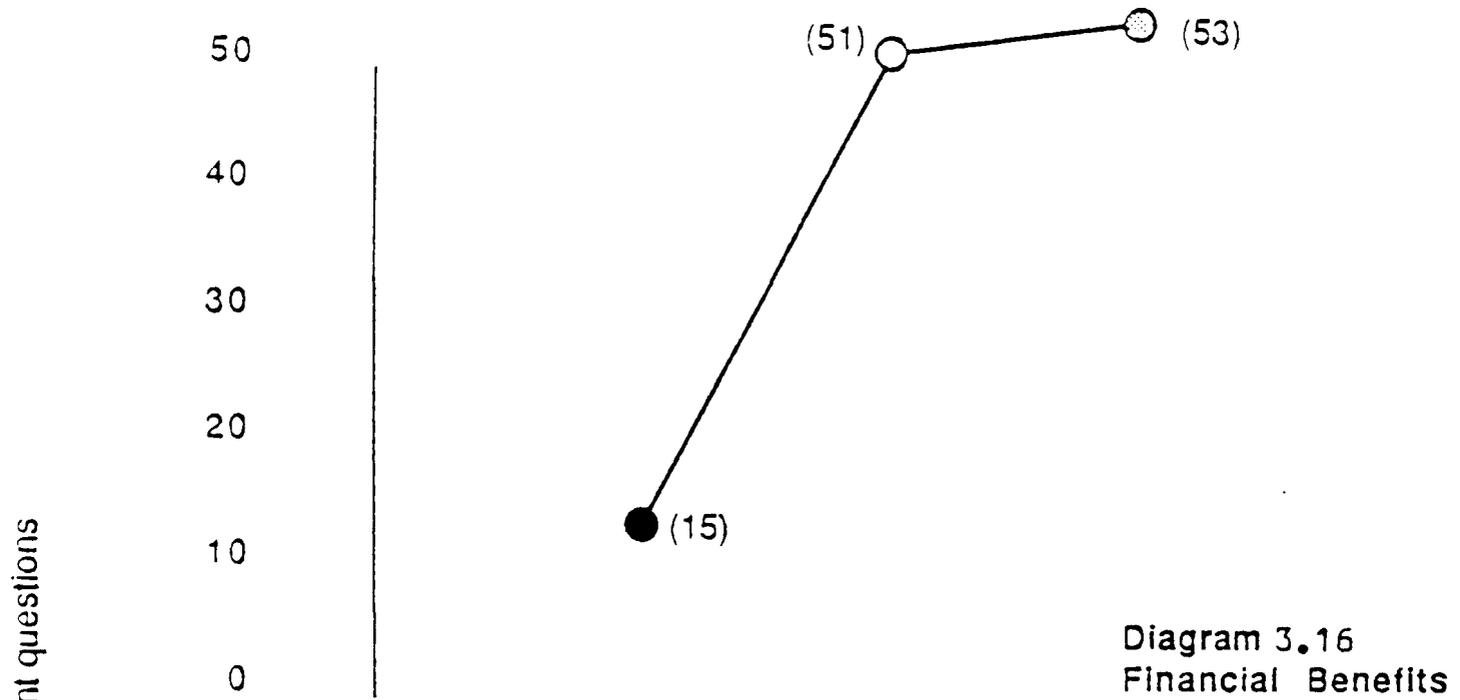
Number of times each factor was listed in response to three different questions

● Factors contributing to level of enjoyment at work
○ Reasons for having thought about going back to work
○ Anticipated benefits of future employment

As can be seen from the diagrams, the way in which the pattern of responses is grouped does not appear to be random. The first three factors, financial benefits, intellectual stimulation and self image can be seen as comprising one group, and social interaction and job satisfaction a second category. These latter two factors would seem to be important to the group as a whole (in terms of number of times listed) when looking at the factors contributing to the level of enjoyment at work, pre-break. Financial benefits was not frequently cited as a contributory factor at this stage. However, when looking at the women's reasons for having thought about returning to work, the pattern is reversed, with financial benefits being seen as important and job satisfaction and social interaction decreasing in importance. Although the responses in the two sets of factors do not differ quite so widely when looking at the benefits of future employment, financial benefits are nevertheless viewed as more important than the other two factors.

The importance of financial benefits, intellectual stimulation and self image appear to increase in the third stage of decision-making. The former assumed much greater importance when the women were considering returning to work, while the value of self image dramatically increased in terms of the anticipated benefits of future employment. In diagrams 3.19 and 3.20, social interaction and job satisfaction were seen as important while in work, but, somewhat surprisingly, were less important when thinking about returning.

The five factors were more frequently cited at points 1 and 3 - relating to the first and third stages of the model - than at point 2. The lower overall response rate to the second question - reasons for

having thought about going back to work - could possibly be due to its less tangible nature.

Given the open nature of these three questions, subjects' responses included up to 5 or 6 different factors. However, when only the first, and perhaps most salient factor was noted, the overall pattern remained much the same (see Tables 3.21). Again, there was a lower response to the second question, indicating that more women at this point had made no response at all. It would seem that it is easier to look either backwards or forwards than to think more directly about a potential decision.

TABLE 3.21

FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE DECISION TO RETURN TO WORK - BY FIRST RESPONSE ONLY

FACTORS	FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ENJOYMENT AT WORK	REASONS FOR HAVING THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK	ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF FUTURE EMPLOYMENT
FINANCIAL BENEFITS	4	29	28
INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION	18	18	20
SELF IMAGE	10	18	23
SOCIAL INTERACTION	25	3	13
JOB SATISFACTION	38	5	22

3.6 FACTOR VALIDATION STUDY

In looking at decision-making in the preliminary survey, the focus was primarily on Decision point 3 in the model - the return to work. Three sections within the survey related specifically to this area: work experience prior to the career break, reasons for having thought about returning to work and the anticipated benefits of future employment. As seen in the previous section (3.5), results highlighted five factors that seemed to be particularly important to the women across all three areas, thus suggesting some consistency in their decision-making processes. These factors were: job satisfaction, social interaction, financial benefits, intellectual stimulation and self image. It was decided to check the reliability of these factors in the three areas by taking another group of women and presenting them with the 5 factors, mixed up with a number of less important factors, and asking them to rank the factors in order of importance.

SAMPLE

A different sample of respondents to that in the preliminary survey was used, but with the same demography. A total of 78 women completed the postal questionnaire.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was divided into three sections, each relating to a specific area of the work situation:

1) Enjoyment of last job

In this section the women were asked to think about the factors that they felt were important to them, and had contributed most to their enjoyment of their last job.

2) Reasons for having thought about returning to work

This was concerned with what women felt were the most important factors they would take into consideration when thinking about returning to work.

3) Anticipated benefits of future employment

In this part of the questionnaire, the women were asked to think about what it was they expected to get out of working again.

Within each section a list of eight suggested factors was provided, together with examples, so as to make make clear what was being referred to in each case. Subjects were then given a separate list of the same factors, and asked to rank these in order of importance from 1 to 8, making sure that a number was placed against all the factors in the list.

These lists consisted of: a) the five most important factors and b) the 'dummy' factors. The former were: job satisfaction, social interaction, financial benefits, intellectual stimulation and self image. These same five factors were included in the list for each section, as they had been found to be important to the women across all three areas relating to the decision-making processes. The 'dummy' factors were different in the three sections: resource

utilization, physical work environment and travel in Section 1, relating to enjoyment of last job; time issues, age and preferred alternatives in section 2, which was concerned with the reasons for having thought about returning, and altruistic motives, improved health and family respect in Section 3, which focused on the anticipated benefits of future employment. It is important to note that although these factors are termed 'dummies' or unimportant factors, they do, in fact, derive from the women's own responses to the original questionnaire, and could therefore be seen as constituting part of their thinking about the issues in general. However, they constituted such a small number of the responses to these particular questions that no category was warranted during analysis.

Tables 3.22, 3.23, and 3.24 show the sum of ranks, the variance and the modal value for all the factors in each of the three sections.

TABLE 3.22

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ENJOYMENT AT WORK			
Factors	Sum of ranks	Variance	Modal value
Social Interaction	246	3.0	2
Job Satisfaction	255	3.7	1
Financial Benefits	298	4.5	1
Resource Utilization	309	4.2	6
Intellectual Stimulation	316	3.3	3
Self image	330	3.6	5
Physical Work Environment	485	2.5	7
Travel	569	2.4	8

TABLE 3.23

REASONS FOR HAVING THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING			
Factors	Sum of ranks	Variance	Modal value
Intellectual Stimulation	253	2.6	4
Social Interaction	257	2.9	1,4 *
Job Satisfaction	269	3.4	4
Financial Benefits	270	3.9	1
Self Image	288	3.6	3
Time Issues	453	3.9	6,7,8*
Age	499	3.1	7
Preferred Alternatives	522	3.3	8
* Not unique			

TABLE 3.24

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF FUTURE EMPLOYMENT			
Factors	Sum of ranks	Variance	Modal value
Intellectual Stimulation	224	2.5	3
Social Interaction	241	2.9	1,2 *
Job Satisfaction	257	3.2	1,2,3*
Financial Benefits	281	4.1	1
Self Image	320	3.0	4
Altruistic Motives	487	3.0	7
Improved Health	495	3.7	8
Family Respect	502	2.7	7
* Not unique			

RESULTS

The factors were ranked in order of importance by sum of ranks, and as can be seen from Tables 3.23 and 3.24, there was a perfect separation into the five most important factors and the less important - or 'dummy' factors across these two areas. In Table 3.22, the five summed ranks for the most important factors go from 246 to

330, while those for the unimportant factors go from 309 to 569. Effectively, resource utilization is out of kilter because the other two unimportant factors have ranks of 485 and 569. However, in terms of modal values, Table 3.22 shows a clear separation into the important factors and the 'dummy' factors, as do Tables 3.23 and 3.24. Thus, there can be seen to be a perfect separation of the factors in terms of modal value and a fairly clear separation in terms of summed ranks.

Variances are similar for all factors in all tables, indicating that when women were making judgements, the group was treating all factors similarly. Despite that, modal values and summed ranks show clear separation of factors into the five that had been found to be most important in the preliminary survey, and the 'dummy' factors.

QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

32 women (20% of the sample) wrote in the 'Other Comments' section at the back of the questionnaire (see Appendix). An analysis of their comments was made and these were then categorised under several headings. It is important to state, however, that because numbers were so small, several of these categories contain data obtained from only 2 or 3 women.

```
QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK FROM SUBJECTS
1   IMPORTANCE OF MOTHERING ROLE
2   NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS WORKING MOTHERS OF YOUNG
    CHILDREN
3   LOW STATUS OF MOTHERING ROLE
4   INADEQUACY OF CHILD-CARE FACILITIES
5   EMPLOYER ATTITUDES
6   TRAINING AND ADVICE
7   IMPORTANCE OF FINDING THE RIGHT JOB
8   ANSWERS INFLUENCED BY OTHER FACTORS
9   HEALTH PROBLEMS
10  TIME/CONTROL ISSUES
11  QUESTIONNAIRE NEGLECTS SPECIFIC AREAS
```

The first category, the importance of the mothering role, was the largest section and contained a wide range of comments. These were primarily concerned with firstly, the women's belief in the necessity of full-time involvement with their children in the early stages of development and secondly, although not in all cases, their enjoyment of that role. Related to this, but with a different emphasis, were comments made by women who felt strongly that mothers of young

children should not take up employment outside the home. However, it is important to point out that this applied to only 3% of the sample, and even these women, with one exception, were intending to return to work at a later date.

The inadequacy of child-care facilities and the unsympathetic attitudes of employers were also mentioned, as was the lack of appropriate advice and training/retraining for women who had experienced a prolonged break in employment. The low status of the mothering role was another area which the women saw as important enough to comment on more fully. Overall, then, although work-related issues were mentioned, mothering appears to be the central factor in the thought processes that these women go through in considering the return to employment.

Unlike much of the other data analysed earlier in the results section, it would not be either feasible or useful to look at these categories in more detail. However, what has emerged clearly is the overall theme of these comments, and the main issues that women regard as important enough to remark on in addition to the questionnaire proper.

3.8 STRESS SURVEY

Although not a major issue, the preliminary survey identified that many of the women's concerns about returning to work were related to, or dependent on, family commitments. This brief survey, also part of the preliminary research, was designed to investigate the extent to which these sorts of commitments could be perceived as a source of stress to a similar sample of women.

SOURCES OF STRESS AMONG MARRIED WOMEN WITH CHILDREN - INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to unpack women's decision-making processes, the preliminary survey looked at the attitudes and experiences of women in one of the three identified life stages - the career break. The women were asked to consider the stresses and benefits associated with this stage, as well as making a retrospective assessment of the stresses and benefits of their situation prior to the break. In addition, it focused on the anticipation of future employment and the problems associated with making the decision to return to work.

Results from the preliminary survey indicated that many of the women's concerns about returning to work were related to, or dependent on, family commitments. This is perhaps a reasonable concern given that whatever paid employment a woman takes up, she is invariably responsible for childcare arrangements (Barnett & Marshall, 1991; Steil & Weltman, 1991). This responsibility often extends to other areas, and creates a dilemma for many working women who are faced with undertaking paid work outside the home

while still continuing to be responsible for unpaid work within the home (Scarr, Phillips & McCartney, 1989). A considerable number of the women's concerns related to these issues, and, indeed, 75% of the women anticipated conflict between the different domains as well as overload within them. Similar findings have been reported by other researchers. For example, in a survey of 300 nurses, Sands (1983) looked at the incentives and obstacles that influenced inactive registered nurses to return to employment or remain out of nursing. The three most frequently selected obstacles were role stress, the family and job stress. In particular,

"guilt feelings were expressed about perceived

failures in role performance both as nurses and

homemakers."

Returning to work was therefore anticipated as stressful, and associated with inadequacy in both home and work roles. Like the mothers in the Preliminary Survey, the women in Sands' study expected to encounter difficulties in meeting family responsibilities while working. More recent research (Anderson & Leslie, 1991) has also found that women report significantly more family related stressors than do men.

However, research also indicates that women at home experience stress and, indeed, the weight of the evidence suggests that the employed mother is mentally healthier and more satisfied than her counterpart at home (Chambers, 1989; Waldron & Jacobs, 1989; Weaver & Matthews, 1990). What does seem clear, though, is that both employed mothers and those at home can suffer from stress, and this

can be exacerbated or modified by a number of factors other than work status. Marriage, for instance, has consistently been found to be less healthy for women than for men (Bernard, 1974; Gove & Tudor, 1973; Gove, 1972; Geerken & Gove, 1983; Flowers, 1991), and being in a family also appears to be detrimental to women's health. According to Wimbush (1987):

"The overall conclusion from all the studies carried out to assess general health and well-being is that women in families have poorer psychological health than men."

This brief, small-scale survey was carried out in an attempt to elicit the sources of stress for a number of women in family situations. Often, analysis of stressful situations has been concept rather than data driven. For example, if a woman was a mother and also working, the assumption was that she must be suffering from role stress. This assumption, in effect, reflects a simple dual role hypothesis. What was required was an account, in women's own words, of what they felt constituted stressful events or situations at a particular point in their lives. Content analysis (as described in Chapter 2) allowed for the adoption of a data driven model by letting the categories emerge as naturally as possible from the data. It was also felt that more account needed to be taken of the ways in which women cope and respond to such stresses, and this could be more effectively accomplished by the adoption of a transactional approach.

Although the issue was not addressed directly in the preliminary survey, it was evident that many of the factors identified as

problematical in anticipating the return to work, were present and indeed also problematical in the women's current situation. It was therefore hypothesised that these factors, and in particular, family commitments would make up a high proportion of the responses.

METHOD

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The sample was composed of 55 women, all married with children, and currently living with their husbands all of whom were in employment at the time of data collection. None of the women were in full-time employment, but 30 were involved in varying amounts of paid part-time work. The majority of the women were in the age range of 25 to 45 years, and all were living in the Nottinghamshire area. They were predominantly middle-class, well-educated women who had been in employment prior to the birth of their children. All had left work specifically to have children, and those who had gone back into the labour market had done so after a period at home.

PROCEDURE AND MEASURES

The local organisers of four National Housewives Register groups were contacted, and asked if they would help in a research project. Data was obtained at group meetings, although each subject was instructed to perform the task on her own. A very simple measure was adopted whereby the women were asked to write down (free response mode) the three most stressful things that were happening in their lives at that time. Confidentiality was ensured by giving out blank sheets of paper, and asking subjects to fold them over and return to

the researcher when the list was complete.

RESULTS

Of the 55 responses, 47 women listed three factors, five put forward two, and three gave only one. The 154 items were analysed and then divided into 16 categories (see chart 3.26, overleaf). None of these subjects listed more than one response that could be placed in each category. By far the largest number of responses could be placed under the heading of "children". This fits in with Sharpe's findings (1984). She quotes a woman talking about her memories of motherhood:

> "..... It wasn't the housework I wanted to escape from,
> it was the pressure with the baby, which is sad but
> they are very demanding. In the early stage I almost
> cracked up."

It was considered useful to divide this large category into two separate sections: general and education. "Coping with a child who demands a lot of attention", "I feel I should be spending more time with the children" and "coping with 14 year old son's adolescent problems" are examples of responses falling into the former category (see Table 3.27, for list of categories, examples and frequency of reponse). Stresses arising from educational issues were also mentioned quite frequently, and included "worry that youngest son's lack of confidence is affecting his academic progress", "deciding on which school to send my 11 year old" and "daughter doing badly at school".

Figure 3.26 Sources of Stress.

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SOURCES OF STRESS

Stress Factors

Lack of Soc/Int
Transport Probs
Bereavment
Relocation
Relationships
Other
Role Conflict
Financial
Husband's Work
Time Constraint
Marital Home
Health
Employment
Family Issues
Children

0   10   20   30

Number of Responses
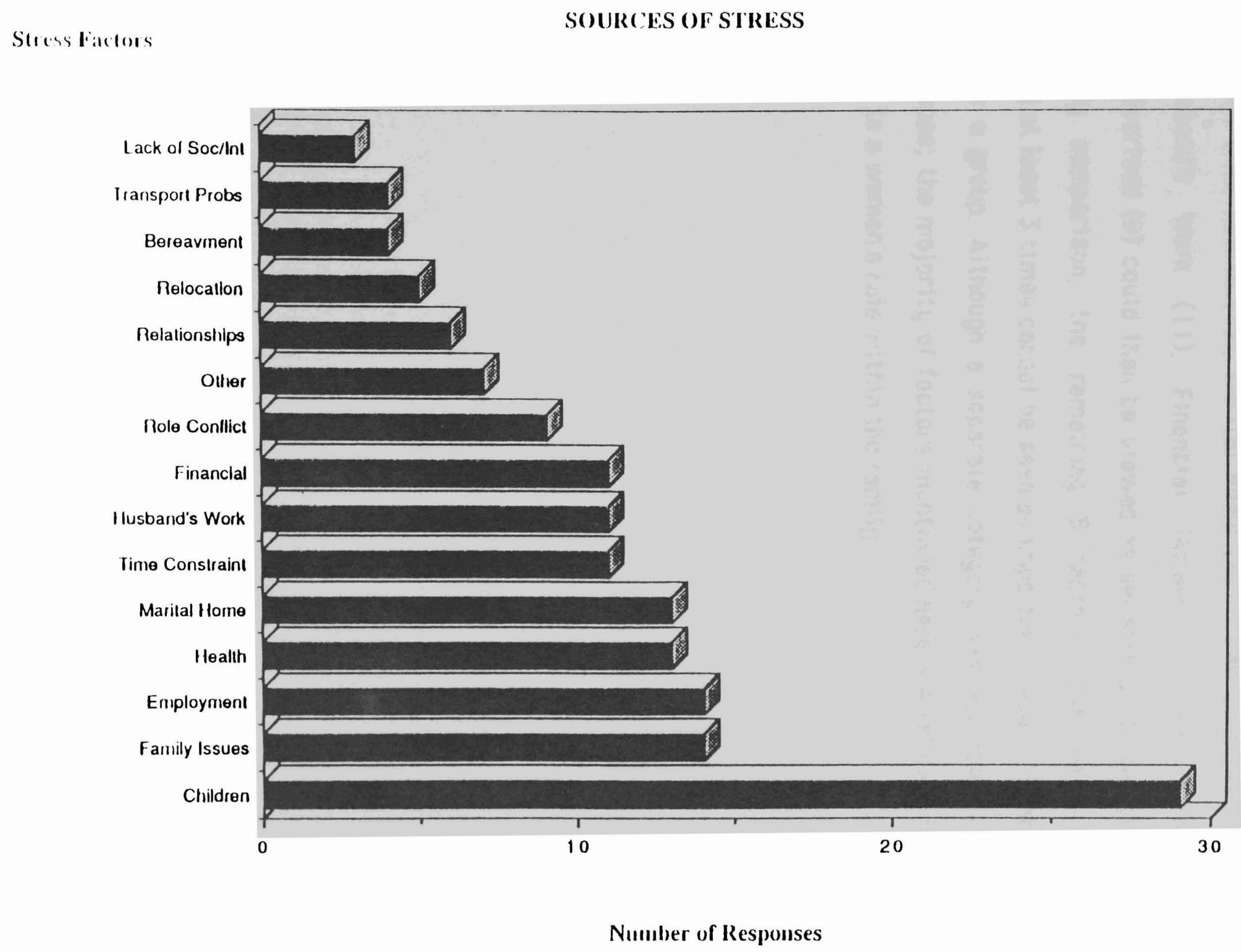
Of the 154 responses, these two sections together made up 18.8% of the total (19 and 10 respectively). The remaining factors can be perhaps be divided into separate levels. Family Issues (14), Employment (14), Health (13), Marital Home (13), Time Constraints (11), Husband's Work (11), Financial Issues (11) and Role Conflict/Overload (9) could then be viewed as secondary sources of stress. By comparison, the remaining 5 factors, although all mentioned at least 3 times cannot be seen as important issues for the women as a group. Although a separate category was ascribed to family issues, the majority of factors mentioned here are related in some way to a woman's role within the family.

TABLE 3.27

Examples of responses from Stress Survey, categories they were assigned, and frequency of response.

Category	Example	Frequency
Children (general)	Continuous arguments with self-willed daughter	12.3%
Children (educational)	Worry that youngest son's lack of confidence is affecting his academic progress	6.5%
Family issues	Disagreement with in-laws	9.1%
Employment	Worry over my job - I've just gone back to part-time teaching	9.1%
Health	Constant backpain and consequent loss of mobility	8.4%
Marital home	Not enough room in the house	8.4%
Time constraints	Being on call 24 hours a day to the family	7.1%
Husband's work	My husband is a workaholic	7.1%
Role conflict	Dashing between part-time job and taking children to and from school	5.8%
Relationship problems	Learning to trust my husband again after a separation	3.9%
Relocation	Husband wants to move - I don't	3.2%
Bereavment	Mother died recently	2.6%
Transport problems	Unreliable car	2.4%
Financial issues	Worry over big mortgage	7.1%
Lack of social interaction	Feeling of isolation with two young children	1.9%

ANALYSIS BY PROBLEM DOMAIN

Analysis allowed the imposition of a hierarchical structure to problem domains, giving rise to the problem tree presented overleaf (3.28). This demonstrates how the factors can be viewed as a series of related but hierarchical areas within an individual's perception of stress. However, it is also possible to look at the responses from a different perspective. By studying them in more depth, it became apparent that there were certain common processes underlying the responses, and these processes could be separated out into two distinct groups. A second content analysis of all responses was therefore undertaken, but this time consideration was given to the latent content of the response, as well as its manifest content. A coding frame was drawn up to establish the procedure by which responses were ascribed to specific process categories. Table 3.29 shows the spread of responses in passive and active areas across the three main problem domains: self, family issues and external issues.

Basically, then, the sources of stress can be seen to fall into three different groups, as mentioned above. The ways in which the women coped with stress seemed to be dependent on the nature of the areas, and these were categorised into active and passive.

Diagram 3.28

ANALYSIS BY PROBLEM DOMAIN

SELF

FAMILY ISSUES

EXTERNAL ISSUES

TIME CONSTRAINTS

ROLE CONFLICT

HEALTH

EMPLOYMENT

LACK OF SOCIAL INTERACTION

FINANCIAL

TRANSPORT PROBLEMS

HUSBAND

MARITAL HOME

CHILDREN

PARENTS

HUSBAND'S JOB

RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

MARITAL HOME

GENERAL

EDUCATIONAL

RELOCATION
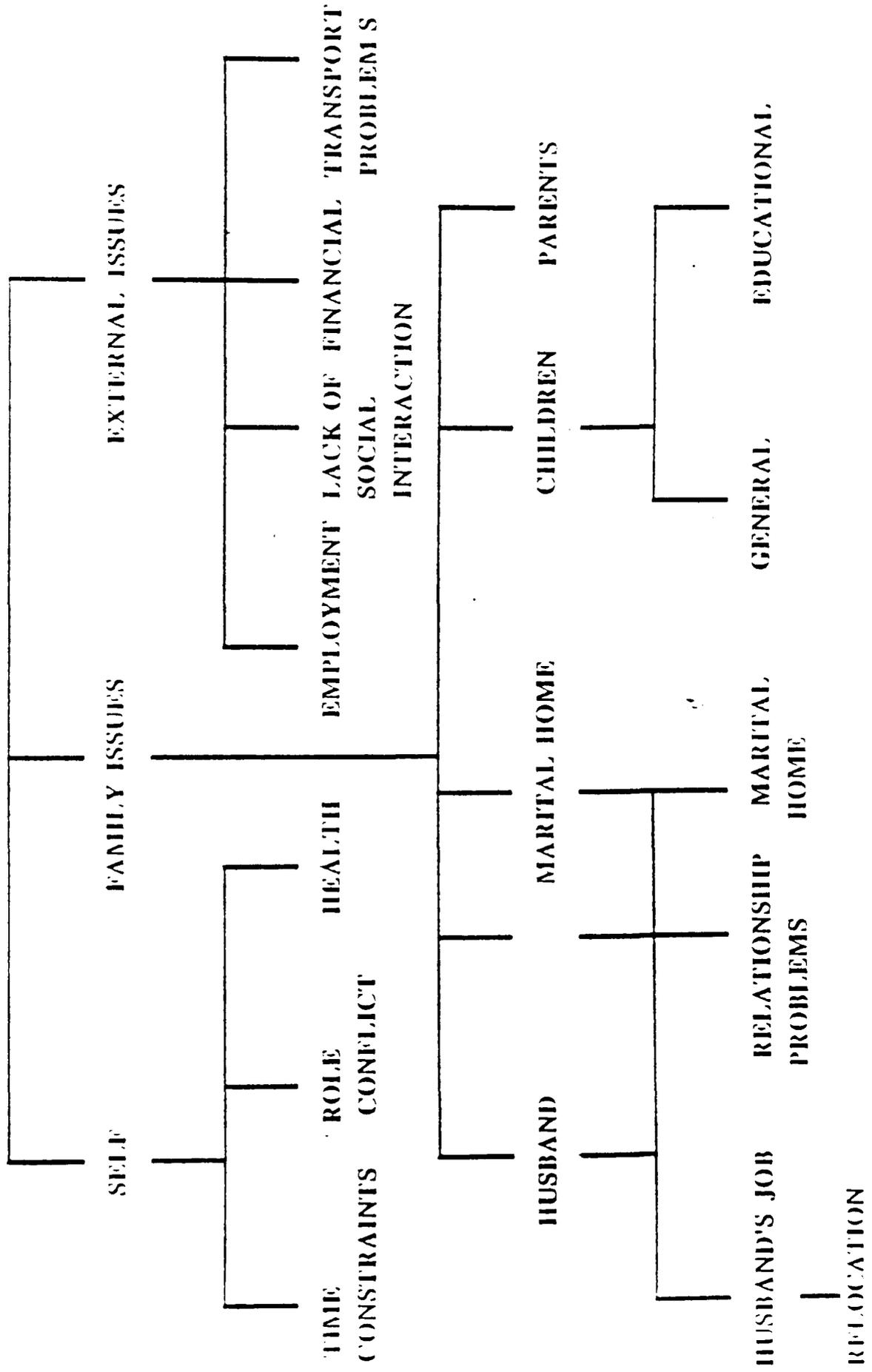
Table 3.29 shows the number of active responses (positive behaviour response, decision-making and coping) and passive responses (worry/anxiety, dissatisfaction and guilt) falling into each of the three problem domains - self, family issues and external issues. Focusing on self and family issues, it was decided to look at the distribution of active/passive responses across these two domains. Table 3.30 shows the 114 responses coded in this way, with boxed totals in the active and passive responses for the two domains. A 2x2 chi-square analysis of these figures was then undertaken, and it was found that the distribution of active/passive responses across Self and Family Issues was not the same. A significantly higher number of responses in the 'Self' domain fell into the active category, whereas for sources of stress in the family, there was more likelihood of a passive response (chi-square = 4.63; df = 1; p < 0.05).

It is argued that each response is independent of any other, even though some responses (up to three) may have been made by the same person. Although the latter may detract from the use of chi-square, the fact is that the responses are independent. The data is based on the frequency count, and there are enough items in each cell to meet standard requirements (Burns & Dobson, 1981).

PROBLEM DOMAINS	REACTION RESPONSES					
	ACTIVE RESPONSES			PASSIVE RESPONSES		
	POSITIVE BEHAV. RESPONSE	DECISION-MAKING	COPING	WORRY/ ANXIETY	DISSATIS-FACTION	GUILT
SELF	10	5	6	9	7	1
FAMILY ISSUES	4	6	16	27	19	4
EXTERNAL ISSUES	5	5	2	7	4	0

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Table 3.30 Distribution of acive and passive responses across self and family issues.

PROBLEM DOMAINS	REACTION RESPONSES					
	ACTIVE RESPONSES			PASSIVE RESPONSES		
	POSITIVE BEHAV. RESPONSE	DECISION-MAKING	COPING	WORRY/ ANXIETY	DISSATIS- FACTION	GUILT
SELF	10	5	6	9	7	1
		TOTAL 21			TOTAL 17	
FAMILY ISSUES	4	6	16	27	19	4
		TOTAL 26			TOTAL 50	

3.9 SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

As outlined in the Introduction (see Chapter 1, Section 1.6), retrospective, current and anticipated stresses and satisfactions were felt to represent the meaningful costs and benefits that women 'weighed up' in making the decision to move between the three identified stages – pre-break, break and post-break. In this survey the sources of such stresses and satisfactions were therefore explored in the women's current situation at home and in their employment prior to the career break. They were also asked to anticipate the stresses and satisfactions associated with the return to work, post-career break.

Results suggest that women generally derived a fair degree of satisfaction from their current role at home (mean 74) and at work prior to the break (mean 69). Nevertheless, a wide range of stresses as well as satisfactions associated with both environments, were identified. On the basis of the data, a cost/benefit model of decision making (Diagram 3.14) was put forward which fits in well with the model proposed in the Introduction. (see Chapter 1, section 1.6). This suggests that the decision to return to work will depend on the balance between the satisfactions and stresses of being at home and the anticipated satisfactions and stresses of post break employment. The latter is clearly influenced by previous work experience in the pre-break stage.

Five factors, financial benefits, intellectual stimulation, self image, job satisfaction and social interaction came up again and again in the women's thinking about these issues, and* were found to be

particularly relevant to the decision to return to work, post-break. These factors were successfully checked for reliability in a separate study (see section 3.6).

Further analysis suggested that the pattern of responses for these five factors, across three questions relating specifically to the decision-making processes, was not random, but fell into two distinct groups (see Diagrams 3.16 - 3.20). Job satisfaction and social interaction in particular showed a very similar pattern, and compared to financial benefits, seemed to demonstrate opposing trends. Job satisfaction and social interaction appeared to be most important to the women when looking back to the pre-break stage, whereas financial benefits gained in importance when the women were anticipating post-break employment.

Time/Control Issues had also been identified as an important factor in response to several of the questions, and the seeming contradiction of time as both a stress and a benefit was explored in detail. Results of further analysis suggested that women who could employ good time management skills saw the freedom to organise their time as a benefit, while those who did not possess this ability viewed it as a problem. This fits in with work suggesting that the ability to see structure and purpose in the use of time is positively related to various indicators of well-being and negatively associated with indicators of distress (Bond & Feather, 1988). The issue was explored further in terms of the transactional model (Cox, 1978, 1985, Cox & McKay, 1981) where it was argued that this ability was affected by the constraints and supports that the women experienced. This was backed up by the finding that a high proportion of the women who saw

time issues as a benefit felt that their families would be supportive if they returned to work.

Looking ahead, a high proportion of women anticipated experiencing role conflict/overload when they returned to employment after a break for children. Both these factors have been associated with working mothers in the literature (Johnson & Johnson, 1976; Yogev, 1983; Brannen & Moss, 1991). It is not therefore surprising that women in this survey, who were at home with children, expected life to be difficult when they went back to work - particularly as they would invariably end up taking responsibility for any future childcare arrangements (Chambers, 1989). Because of the high proportion of women who anticipated this as a factor in post-break employment, a survey focusing specifically on role conflict was carried out (Chapter 5) which explores these issues in greater depth.

Results of the stress survey suggest that there are many different sources of stress for women (see Chart, 3.26) and many different patterns of coping associated with particular stressors. It follows, therefore, that a woman will fulfil many different roles in relation to these sources of stress. Thus the reported experience and anticipation of multiple roles and possible role conflict and overload would seem justified by this analysis. If this is so, then certain of the asssmptions and concepts imposed in other studies, such as simple dual role conflict, must be questioned. These issues are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

The findings of the stress survey lend support to the original hypothesis that mothers of young children see family commitments,

and particularly those relating to children, as a source of stress. More specifically, it would seem that the mothers in this study felt less able to make an active response in regard to issues relating to the family, as opposed to those relating to themselves. Presumably, in this latter instance, they felt more in control and thus more able to affect a change in the situation.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The aims of the preliminary research were basically exploratory, and as a result of this several themes emerged which will be picked up and developed in more detail in later chapters. In particular, retrospective, current and prospective assessments of the work and home environments, in terms of the satisfactions and stresses involved, will be looked at in Chapter 4 from the point of view of women in the three identified life stages. It is also intended to once again measure the levels of stress and satisfaction, and to make comparisons, both quantitative and qualitative, between actual and anticipated, and actual and retrospective assessments for each stage. The decision making processes will be explored in greater depth and considered in terms of the model of key decision points put forward in the Introduction.

CHAPTER 4   THE MAIN SURVEY

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The main survey expanded the research in terms of the subject sample, by looking at three separate groups of women, one in each of the three stages: pre-career break, career break and post career break. The attitudes to and experiences of the work and home environments were looked at in greater depth so as to draw out as accurately as possible the meaning that these situations had for the women. Particular attention was paid to the decision-making processes associated with the return to work, post-career break. The stresses and satisfactions were also considered in more detail, with women being asked to assess their levels of stress and satisfaction retrospectively, in their current situations, and in anticipation of future stages, the aim being to compare ther levels across the three different stages. A questionnaire-based survey was developed, and designed specifically so as to enable all information to be drawn from these different groups in the one questionnaire.

HYPOTHESES

1) Women at different stages in the model - i.e. pre-break, break and post-break - will report different levels of stress and satisfaction.

2) Women's reports of the stresses and satisfactions of each stage will differ depending on whether they are:

a) looking back on the stage

b) currently experiencing it

c) anticipating the stage

Following the preliminary research, three further hypotheses were generated:

3) Women's perceptions of the home and work environments, and the decisions they make in relation to these, will reflect the main dimensions identified in the previous studies.

4) The vast majority of women, not currently in paid employment, will plan to return after a career break.

5) While identifying both the stresses and satisfactions in their lives, women will be able to make an overall judgement as to whether they are predominantly stressed or predominantly satisfied with their current situation.

4.1 METHOD

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The subject sample was made up of both single and married women with an age range of 17 to 52 years. They were all women with knowledge of work in the sense that they were either in employment at the time, or had previously worked and intended returning. The three samples under consideration were:

1) **Pre-career break** ie. working women in full-time employment without children.

2) **Career break** ie. women at home with children, not in paid employment.

3) **Post-career break** ie. women who had returned to paid employment after a break for children.

The sample was drawn from two main sources:

1) The first, and largest, group consisted of women attending local health authority family planning clinics in the Nottinghamshire area. They could therefore be described as a group of women, of child-rearing age, who were taking some form of positive action in planning their families.

2) The second group were all members of the National Childbirth Trust, and were therefore mothers with one or more children.

All responses were made on a voluntary basis.

DESIGN

The study was based on a 2-factorial design with 3 levels of each factor (see Diagram 4.1, below). The first factor was 'group' and the second factor was 'stage in career progression'. The first was a between subjects factor, the second a within subjects factor. Each of the three groups of women were studied at different stages in their career/child-rearing history, with each being asked about their current situation. This can be represented on the diagram by a diagonal line running from the top left-hand corner (Group A, stage 1) through the middle section (Group B, stage 2) to the bottom, right-hand corner (Group C, stage 3).

DIAGRAM 4.1
TABLE1

Sample women (3 groups)

	Working women pre career break no children

Stages in work/
child-rearing
history

Women at home
with children
not in paid
employment

Working women
with children
after career break
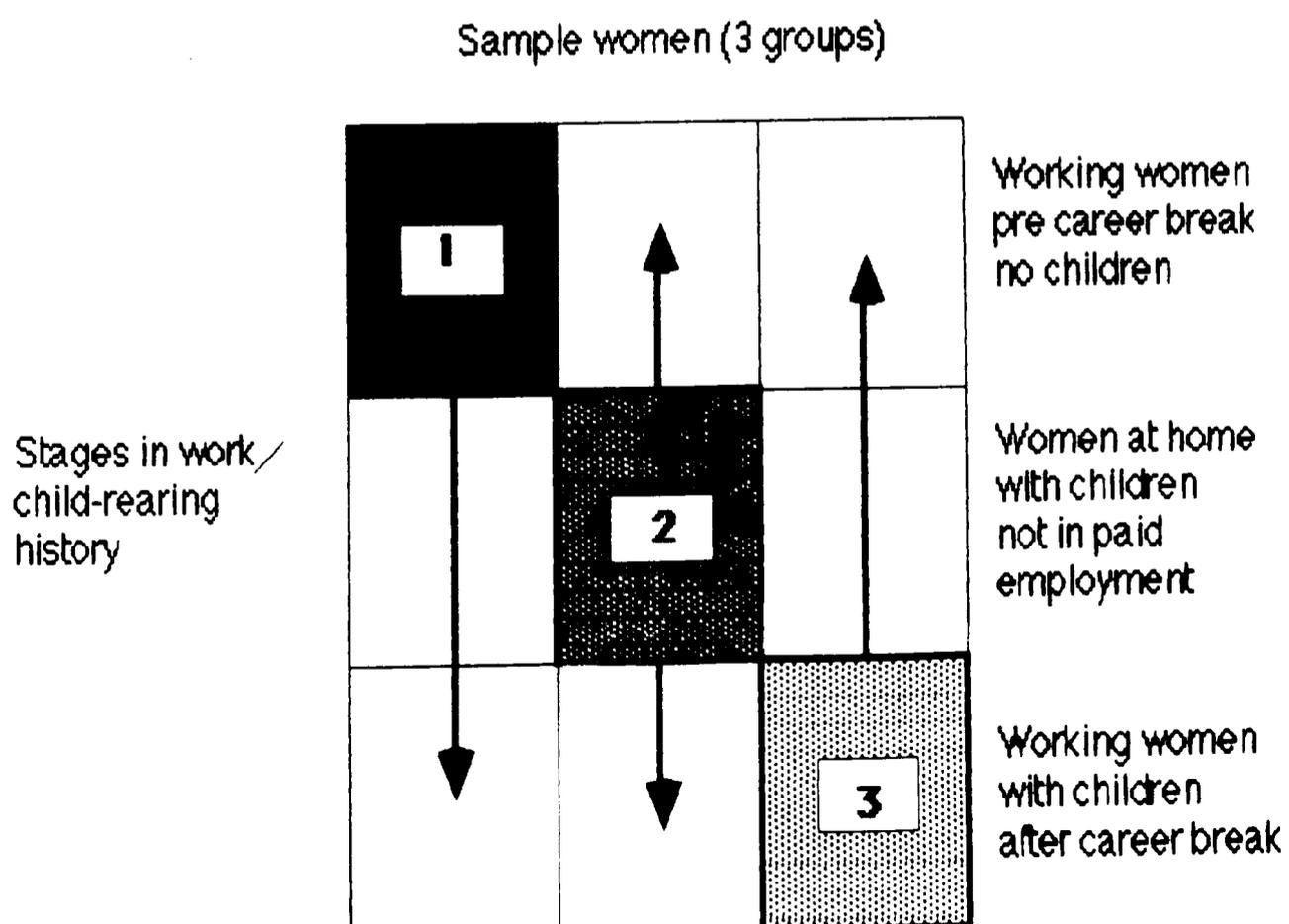
Group A women were working women in full-time employment, without children; Group B were women at home with children, not in paid employment, and Group C was made up of women who had returned to paid employment after a break for children.

Group A women were contacted, via a postal questionnaire, at what was defined as the first stage in their career/child-rearing history (pre-career break). They were asked to describe their current situation, and to look forward to the next stage in this model (career break). Information on their expectations of, and attitudes towards returning to employment after a break for children, was also requested. Group B, contacted during their career break, were asked to look both backwards to the first stage and forward to the third. Similarly, those in Group C were required to focus on their experience of being at home with children and, prior to that, their early work environment.

ANALYSIS

This study represents a quasi-experiment in that despite its factorial nature, subjects could not have been randomly allocated to groups (Cooke and Campbell, 1972). A problem of non-equivalence of groups might thus exist. The data from the three samples were therefore scrutinised for non-equivalence; statistical control of any differences was afforded by use of covariance or regression techniques.

The 5-section questionnaire (see Appendix) is described in detail in the Methodology Chapter.

PILOTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was piloted through the Family Planning Association clinic in Nottingham. 100 copies of the questionnaire were left in the reception area for the family planning clerks to hand out to clients as they arrived. A smaller pilot was also undertaken with the National Childbirth Trust (NCT). On the basis of these pilot studies several changes were made to the main questionnaire:

1) The visual analogue scale in the pilot study was marked from 0 to 100, and it was noted that several respondents had not only marked the scale as instructed, but also included a percentage score. It was therefore decided to leave the scale intact, but to remove the figures at either end, as it was thought this would produce less opportunity for ambiguous response.

2) Instructions to subjects were improved so as to aid them in filling out the questionnaire.

3) Although the method of distribution had been agreed with the Family Planning Clinic in advance, problems arose over the actual handing out of the questionnaires. The family planning clerks, who were inevitably involved in numerous other routine tasks associated with their job, were not handing out enough questionnaires to meet the requirements of the study. It was therefore decided that in distributing the questionnaire proper, an attempt would be made to instigate more formal channels of distribution through discussions with the Health Authority. No

such problems were identified with the NCT.

THE MAIN STUDY

1) The greater part of the study proper was carried out with the cooperation of Nottingham Health Authority who agreed to distribute the questionnaires through their local family planning clinics (details of negotiations, letters etc. can be found in the appendix). A sample questionnaire, together with a brief summary of the research to date and an outline of its aims and objectives, was circulated to the doctors involved in each area, as their permission was needed before the project could proceed. 18 out of the 24 Health Centres initially agreed to participate in the study. In discussions with the health authority it was agreed that questionnaires would be handed out by the family planning clerk during clinic sessions. In compliance with usual questionnaire protocol, a covering letter was sent out stressing the voluntary nature of the questionnaires, but also emphasizing the need to complete and return them. It was also explained that while the local health authority had given permission for questionnaires to be distributed in its clinics, the study was part of a research project being undertaken at Nottingham University. All questionnaires were distributed with a stamped addressed envelope.

However, it soon became apparent that distribution was not proceeding as planned and the initial return rate was very poor. Enquiries were made at the Community Unit where negotiations had taken place at an earlier stage in the planning of the project.

These revealed a marked lack of communication between the different levels involved in the setting up of the project, in particular between the medical practitioners and the administrative staff. It was found that the summary of research which had been sent out several months prior to the start of the project (see above) had not been circulated to either the clinic staff or the doctors in charge. As a consequence, the arrival of the questionnaires was, not surprisingly, greeted with a marked lack of enthusiasm and an unwillingness to participate by virtually all clinic staff. Negotiations were once again entered into with administrative staff at Community Headquarters where it was acknowledged that mistakes had been made. A letter was then sent out from the administration to all clinics, explaining the situation and stressing the importance of the project. At the same time, the researcher visited several clinics, and as well as talking to doctors and staff, handed out questionnaires to patients. After these interventions the return rate rose briefly, but then went down again. It was therefore decided to bring in a cut-off date re: the handing out of questionnaires, after which an attempt would be made to recover all those that had not been distributed to respondents.

2) With the help of the local organiser for the National Childbirth Trust, approximately 250 questionnaires with stamped addressed envelopes were distributed to members, along with the organisation's newsletter. Initial returns were encouraging, but then slowed down. Once again, a cut-off date was decided upon, but given the nature of this exercise no attempt was made to increase the response rate.

4.2 RESULTS

The results are described in detail below.

SUBJECT SAMPLE

320 questionnaires were returned and, of these, 237 fell into the required categories. The overall sample was made up of women between the ages of 17 and 52, with a mean age of 31.1. A majority were either married or living in a stable relationship, and 73.9% had children. Socio-economically they could be described as a predominantly middle class group.

Table 4.2 shows a breakdown of all respondents, with the three main groups highlighted at the top. For the purposes of this chapter, the term 'groups' will refer only to the three groups thus indicated.

EQUIVALENCE OF GROUPS

The three groups were tested for equivalence, using one way analysis of variance, in terms of their their current levels of stress and satisfaction. There were no significant differences found between groups. The distribution of demographic variables was also found to be broadly equivalent between the three groups. There was, however, a significant difference in age, $F(2,207) = 63.08$, $p < 0.0001$. Table 4.3 shows the spread of ages in each of the three groups.

TABLE 4.2 SUBJECTS

SUBJECT SAMPLE	
Category	Numbers in each category
(a) Pre-career break	**67**
(b) Career break	**91**
(c) Post career-break	**79**
(d) Working women in full-time employment without children -no plans to have children	20
(e) Working women with children who had not taken a career break	24
(f) Questionnaires incomplete	31
(g) Does not fit into any category eg. student; women without children working part-time	9
TOTAL	320

TABLE 4.3   AGE RANGE

AGE OF RESPONDENTS IN EACH GROUP				
Group	Mean	Min.	Max.	St. Dev.
A	25.6	17	36	3.8
B	30.9	20	43	4.8
C	35.9	24	52	6.1

Group A   Pre-career break

Group B   Career break

Group C   Post-career break

It can be seen that not only does age increase with the move through the groups from A to C, but the spread of ages also increases. The range of ages (and individual differences in age) increases across the groups. It is interesting to note that there is a similar step, of approximately 5 years, between A and B, as between B and C. Examination of the differences between the ages of pairs of groups, using Student's T test, revealed that each was significantly different from the others.

TABLE 4.4 T TEST MATRIX FOR GROUP MEANS

T TEST MATRIX FOR GROUP MEANS (207 Degrees of Freedom)	Group A Pre-career Break	Group B Career Break
Group A Pre-career Break		
Group B Career Break	5.5***	
Group C Post-career Break	11.17***	6.44***

The groups, then, can be seen as broadly equivalent in many important respects, other than age. It will therefore be necessary to take age into consideration in later analyses.

4.3 EFFECTS OF LIFE STAGES

Consistent with the exploration of factors involved in the decision-making processes, women were asked about their stresses and satisfactions.

1) STRESS

The women were asked how stressful they felt their current situation was, and were also asked to look back to the previous stages, and/or forward to the next one, depending on their present status. They indicated this by making an appropriate mark on a visual analogue scale, with one end representing no stress at all and the other, extreme stress. The scale was a 100-millimetre line, with 0 representing no stress and 100 extreme stress. Responses were measured, from the left, using a ruler. The results, in each of the stages, can be seen below.

TABLE 4.5   AGE ADJUSTED STRESS SCORES

MEAN STRESS SCORES FOR EACH GROUP ACROSS THE THREE DIFFERENT REPORTING STAGES			
	GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C
PRE-BREAK	54.9	50.3	45.3
BREAK	54.2	39.6	39
POST-BREAK	55.9	60	48.5

An analysis of covariance, taking out age as a factor, showed that there was a significant simple difference between groups on the measure of stress, $F_{(2,215)} = 3.79$, $p < 0.05$, and a significant simple difference between stress levels at the three reporting stages, $F_{(2,432)} = 10.67$, $p < 0.0001$. A significant interaction between stage and group was also found, $F_{(2,432)} = 2.87$, $p < 0.05$. Figure 4.7 shows this clearly. The women in Group A (pre-career break), reported currently experiencing a comparatively high level of stress, and when they were asked to look ahead to the next two stages, they saw this as being maintained at a similar level. The pattern is different for the other two groups. Group B, currently in their career break, see higher stress levels when looking back to pre-break employment, and anticipate even greater stress on the return to work. However, they appear to be experiencing lower stress levels in their current situation. The post-break group (Group C) show a similar pattern, in that, looking back, their lowest stress was during the career break, but they, too, reported the pre and post-break employment situations as more stressful.

FIGURE 4.6 GRAPH SHOWING STRESS SCORES FOR EACH GROUP ACROSS THE THREE STAGES
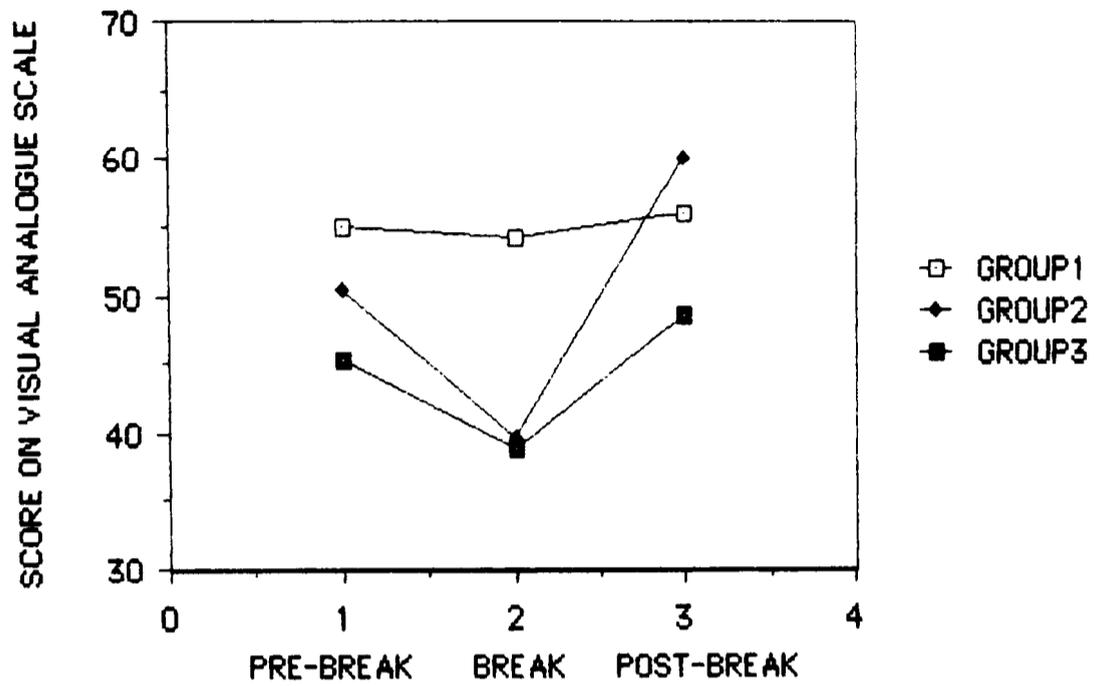
SOURCES OF STRESS

The data was looked at in different ways:

1) A comparison was made between both the levels of stress and the sources of stress reported by the three groups in their current situation.

DIAGRAM 4.7   COMPARISON OF STRESS LEVELS REPORTED BY EACH GROUP IN THEIR CURRENT SITUATION

Group

Reporting Stage	A	B	C
Pre-break	54.9		
Break		39.6	
Post-break			48.5

N.B. Figures represent stress scores measured on a 100-millimetre visual analogue scale

Group A / Pre-break   N = 67

Group B / Break   N = 91

Group C / Post-break   N = 79

Considered in this way, the quantitative data would seem to indicate that women at home experience less stress than women at work, both before and after the career break. The sources of stress reported by the women are listed in Table 4.8. As can be seen in the table, Group C, in the post-career stage, were divided into two categories. The women were asked to list the factors that had contributed to their level of stress both in the work situation and in their role as working mothers. The numbers in the following tables refer to the percentage of those women, responding to the question, who put forward a particular factor as contributing to their level of stress.

TABLE 4.8

MAIN SOURCES OF STRESS ASSOCIATED WITH CURRENT SITUATION

Sources of Stress	Group A Pre-break	Group B Break	Group C	
			At work post-break	In role as working mother
Pressure	70%	-	44%	-
Nature of Job	34%	-	39%	-
Interpersonal Relations	27%	-	31%	-
Time Constraints	22%	28%	20%	26%
Work Environment	11%	-	4%	-
Inadequate Resources	8%	-	10%	-
Children's Demands	-	71%	-	-
Frustration of Repetitive Routine	-	25%	-	-
Health Issues	-	19%	-	16%
'No Time for Yourself'	-	18%	-	-
Lack of Social Interaction	-	14%	-	-
Financial Issues	2%	14%	6%	-
Lack of Intellectual Stimulation	-	6%	-	-
Role Conflict/ Overload	-	-	17%	62%
Childcare Facilities	-	-	-	33%
Unsupportive Partner/ Colleagues	-	-	-	8%

As can be seen from Table 4.8, 'Pressure' was the largest source of stress for women at work, pre-career break, and also for those who had returned after the break. This was used primarily in the context of the work situation, where it could not be identified solely in terms of time pressure (in which case it would have been included in the Time Constraints category). 70% of the former saw it as a factor contributing to their level of stress compared to 44% of the latter. Almost without exception, Group A women restricted their comments to problems associated with, or experienced within, the work environment. For example, a production secretary for a television company stated:

"There's just a lot of pressure - other people are
under pressure and they put you under pressure"

Other comments included:

" Pressure of workload"

"I feel that the biggest stress is the pressure of
working in a male dominated environment in
which chauvinism is rife".

"The pressure of managing other people.'

However, many of the responses made by Group C women - ie working mothers - included home/family pressures as well as work related stresses. However, they talked about these only in response to the question asking them about the stresses involved

in the work situation post-break, hence the 'nil score' under the heading 'In role as working mother'. This can perhaps be seen as a good indication of women's inability to separate out the home and work spheres. The women started out by talking about work, in response to that question, but ended up talking about the pressures at home. Below are some examples:

> "I feel I'm always under pressure at work because
> I do a difficult job which is isolated, undervalued
> and certainly underpaid....... but the pressure at
> home is worse - the children are very demanding
> when I'm there and I feel I've lost control of it".

> "There's a lot of pressure at work, but the biggest
> problem is fitting in my domestic commitments
> with the job".

Stresses related specifically to the nature of the job were also mentioned by 34% of the pre-career break women, and 27% found interpersonal relations to be a problem. The latter referred to issues such as friction between colleagues or inability to 'get on with the boss'. For example:

> "I just don't get on with the people in the new
> office and since I was moved there I've been
> really miserable".

When asked to consider the main sources of stress associated with their roles as working mothers, 62% of Group C women put forward

'Role Conflict/Overload' as a factor. A common theme running through the responses was the extent to which women related conflicting roles to time issues. For example:

"Not enough time to spread myself between job, house, child and husband - hard to find a balance".

"Ensuring that the child is collected on time. Having enough time to complete household chores and have time for husband, baby and job".

"I need a wife! No time in each day to work as well as run home, look after and fulfil children's and husband's needs".

Inadequate childcare facilities, and the problems involved in making suitable arrangements that would fit in with home, school and work schedules, were also seen as problematic. 33% of Group C women put this down as a factor contributing to their level of stress.

Although not asked about specifically, the part played by children in the women's perceptions of their situation was an extremely important factor, and it emerged in response to several questions. For women at home, 'Children's Demands' was by far the most significant source of stress, and was mentioned by almost threequarters (71%) of the women. Examples include:

'Both (children) are very young - therefore constant

bowling and fighting 12 hours a day.'

'Tired children are demanding. It is hard to cook
dinner with a crying toddler clinging to your leg.'

The frustration of a repetitive routine, lack of social interaction
and of intellectual stimulation, and issues concerning time, health
and finance were also seen as problems or sources of stress for
women at home.

'Time Constraints' was the only factor listed by all three groups in
response to the questions. Although it was mentioned explicitly by
many of the women, it related to different analyses of time in
each group. For the pre-career break women, time issues were
mentioned within the context of the work situation, and related to
the nature of the job. For women at home, lack of time was seen as
one of the consequences of 'being on call 24 hours a day'. A further
category, also related to time, was included for this group, as 18%
of the women commented specifically on the lack of time for
themselves, for looking after their own needs. For example:

'Frustration at the lack of time I have to do what
I want to do.'

'Having no time to be myself and do the things I
wish to do.'

For the working mother, as mentioned above, time constraints
were frequently related to the demands of conflicting roles.

As indicated in the Introduction, it was felt to be useful to assess how accurate women were in their anticipated and retrospective assessments of the different stages, in comparison to assessments made by women actually experiencing that stage. This is particularly important when considering post-break employment because if women in the first two stages (Groups A and B) make inaccurate assumptions, this might well influence thier decision to return. A comparison was therefore made between current experience of stress and anticipated or retrospective assessments **at each stage**. This is illustrated in Diagram 4.9.

DIAGRAM 4.9

COMPARISON OF ACTUAL EXPERIENCE OF STRESS (CURRENT SITUATION)▨ WITH ANTICIPATED AND RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENTS AT EACH REPORTING STAGE

Reporting Stage	Group		
	A	B	C
Pre-break	54.9	50.3 ←	45.3 ←←
Break	54.2 →	39.6	39 ←
Post-break	55.9 →→	60 →	48.5

By looking at the data in this way a certain pattern could be seen. When the totals for retrospective appraisal of a stage (134.6) were compared with the totals for actual experience of stress at that stage (149.4), the retrospective assessment appeared slightly less stressful than the stage actually reported (see Table 4.10) When the same procedure was adopted in relation to anticipation of a given stage, then a different pattern emerged (see Table 4.11). The comparable means for anticipated stress (170.1) were considerably higher than that reported in the actual stage (136.6). In relation to the return to work, it is clear that Group A and Group B women were expecting a far more stressful situation than that actually identified by women currently in post-break employment.

TABLE 4.10 COMPARISON OF ACTUAL AND RETROSPECTIVE APPRAISAL OF STRESS (BY STAGE)

	Actual	Retrospective
	54.9	50.3
	54.9	45.3
	39.6	39.0
Totals	149.4	134.6

TABLE 4.11 COMPARISON OF ACTUAL AND ANTICIPATED APPRAISAL OF STRESS (BY STAGE)

	Actual	Anticipated
	39.6	54.2
	48.5	55.9
	48.5	60.0
Totals	136.6	170.1

It could therefore be argued that:

1) Anticipation tends to an overestimation of the size of the problem. This has clear implications for the decision to return to work, and will be considered in detail in the Discussion.

2) When looking back on past events, their impact tends to be underestimated, but not to the same extent as the overestimation of future stages.

Table 4.12 shows the sources of stress associated with pre-break employment. The factors put forward by the women in Group A - ie women without children, working full-time - relate to thir current situation. The list of stress factors reported by Groups B and C are retrospective assessments of their pre-break employment situation.

TABLE 4.12 SOURCES OF STRESS ASSOCIATED WITH PRE-BREAK EMPLOYMENT

Problems	Group A Pre-break Current situation	Group B Break Looking back one stage	Group C Post-break Looking back two stages
Pressure	70%	51%	41%
Nature of Job	34%	43%	28%
Interpersonal Relations	27%	31%	28%
Time Constraints	22%	22%	14%
Role Conflict/ Overload	-	10%	14%
Inadequate Resources	8%	7%	.7%
Work Environment	11%	4%	18%

While Group A's appraisal related to their current situation, Group B and Group C were looking back one and two stages respectively. The same factors, with one exception, were reported by all three groups in their assessment of stress at the pre-break employment stage, and these factors were listed in approximately the same order of importance. The exception, role conflict/overload, is interesting in that when reporting **current** sources of stress, this

was only seen as a problem by working mothers. However, when asked to look back and say what problems they had encountered at the pre-break stage, 10% of women in Group B and 14% in Group C reported having experienced role conflict/overload, but it is not reported as a current experience of stress by Group A women. It might be that in anticipating this as a problem in future employment (Group B) and experiencing it in their role as working mothers (Group C), it becomes associated with the work situation more generally.

If pressure is seen as the largest component of stress by these respondents, then it is not surprising that the figures follow the same pattern as do the more general scores for actual and retrospective asssessments of stress at each reporting stage (see Table 4.10) i.e. when looking back on past events their impact tends to be underestimated. As indicated in the Introduction, women operate in a changing environment and this can perhaps be seen as a reflection of the changing framework of experience by which judgements are made.

Table 4.13 shows the sources of stress associated with being at home with children for women in that situation, and also for those women in groups A and C - ie pre and post-career break - who were asked to either anticipate the problems or to look back on those they had experienced at the earlier stage.

TABLE 4.13

MAIN SOURCES OF STRESS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING AT HOME WITH CHILDREN

Problems	Group A Pre- break (anticipated)	Group B Break (current)	Group C Post-break (retrospective)
Frustration of Repetitive Routine	59%	25%	29%
Lack of Social Interaction	43%	14%	36%
Financial Disadvantages	38%	14%	27%
Loss of Independence	30%	-	-
Low Self Image	20%	-	7%
Time Constraints	20%	37%	13%
Lack of Intellectual Stimulation	18%	6%	13%
Children's Demands	-	71%	37%
Health Issues	-	19%	17%

For women at home, children's demands were by far the biggest source of stress. This was one of only two factors (health issues

being the other) not anticipated by women in the pre-break stage.

The separate categories relating to time for Group B women, 'Time Constraints' and 'No Time for Yourself' (see Table 4.8, p. 169), were integrated, by including all those whose responses fell into one or the other, or both, within the same category. 37% of women in this group perceived time issues to be a source of stress. Constraints on time, although anticipated, were not seen to be as important to Group A women as they actually were for those experiencing the stage. Perhaps, until one actually has children, the demands they make on time, energy and consequently health, are greatly underestimated.

However, the other anticipated factors associated with being at home with children were all overestimated by Group A women - indeed, two of these, loss of independence and low self image, anticipated as a problem by 30% and 20 % of women respectively, were not listed as problems by women actually in that stage. Lack of social interaction and the frustration of a repetitive routine were also considerably overestimated. Comments like the following, from a 23yr. old trainee accountant, were quite common:

> "I know for a fact that isolation/lack of
> communication is a very real problem when
> mothers opt to stay at home".

Women also wrote about the fear of losing their 'freedom and identity' and of 'existing for someone else's needs'.

In the retrospective assessment, time constraints, children's demands and health issues again showed a different pattern from the rest, in that they were underestimated. The first two, in particular, were very much underestimated. Looking back, only 13% of the Group C women saw time constraints as a source of stress when they were at home with children, compared with 37% of the Group B women who were actually experiencing that stage. Similarly, children's demands were identified as a source of stress by 37% of the Group C women, but by 71% of those currently at home. However, the others factors were seen as more problematic than they actually were - lack of social interaction, financial disadvantages and lack of intellectual stimulation in particular.

A list of the main problems associated with returning to work post-career break are given in Table 4.14. The factors put forward by groups A and B were both anticipated, whereas the women in this stage - ie Group C - were reporting their actual experiences. Changing technology was seen as the major source of stress by Group A women, with a fairly high proportion (57%) envisaging problems in returning to work because of anticipated changes in the workplace, and/or in their specific area of expertise. For example, comments in response to the question 'What problems do you think you might face in going back to work after a career break?' included:

"Being out of touch with the field both technically and scientifically".

TABLE 4.14   MAIN SOURCES OF STRESS ASSOCIATED WITH
RETURNING TO WORK AFTER THE CAREER BREAK

Problems	Group A Pre-break (anticipated)	Group B Break (anticipated)	Group C Post-break (experienced)
Role Conflict/ Overload	44%	53%	37%
Changing Technology	57%	15%	15%
Readjustment to Routine	30%	6%	5%
Lack of Confidence	19%	9%	15%
Childcare Facilities	-	53%	25%
Finding Suitable Employment	8%	17%	-
Unsupportive Partner/Colleagues	10%	5%	7%
Low Status	10%	4%	1%
Time Constraints	-	7%	7%
Age	6%	1%	-

> "Changing technology – an update in
> machinery while you're away".

> "Missing out on new developments and
> advances in technology".

> "Being used to out of date machines
> and methods".

This again highlights the fact that women thinking about returning to work are making these points in the context of a changing environment.

Women's responses categorised under the role conflict/overload heading included:

> "Conflict between demands of job and
> home. There isn't enough time to do
> both, but if I worked part-time, there
> might be resentments from colleagues
> and a questioning of my commitment
> to my job".

> "Difficulty in maintaining 2 roles –
> mother and worker".

> "Having to take time off work to look
> the children when they're ill. Getting
> more tired because you're trying to do

too many things".

It is apparent from Table 4.14 that the majority of problems anticipated in returning to work post-career break were considerably overestimated. The exceptions, which show a similar pattern to the factors in Table 4.13, were childcare facilities and time constraints. These were not anticipated as problems by pre-career break women. However, a high proportion of women at home with children do anticipate problems in arranging adequate childcare facilities. While slightly overestimated, the figures for lack of confidence were better predicted. The general tone of responses can perhaps be summed up by one woman's comments:

"Simply going back to work after a long

absence - I mean, I just think my

confidence would go".

Figure 4.15, overleaf, illustrates some of the main problems associated with the work situation for women in the pre-break stage, and compares this with their anticipation of the problems they expect to encounter at the post-break stage. The main problems actually experienced by women who have returned after a break for children, are also listed. While the problems may not be accurately estimated by women in the first stage, they do, at least, anticipate the existence of three of the main ones. Childcare facilities, again, is an exception.

FIGURE 4.15 MAIN PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE WORK SITUATION PRE-CAREER BREAK, PROBLEMS IN RETURNING POST-CAREER BREAK, AND POST-CAREER BREAK PROBLEMS ANTICIPATED AT THE PRE-BREAK STAGE

Main problems associated with
work situation PRE-BREAK

PRESSURE
NATURE OF JOB
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS
TIME CONSTRAINTS

Main problems of returning to
work POST-BREAK anticipated
at the PRE-BREAK stage

ROLE CONFLICT/OVERLOAD
CHANGING TECHNOLOGY
READJUSTMENT TO ROUTINE
LACK OF CONFIDENCE

CAREER BREAK

CHILDREN

Main problems encountered in
returning to work POST-BREAK

ROLE CONFLICT/OVERLOAD
CHILDCARE FACILITIES
CHANGING TECHNOLOGY
LACK OF CONFIDENCE

4.4 EFFECTS OF LIFE STAGES

2) SATISFACTION

The data on satisfaction was looked at in the same way as that for stress.

1) The levels of satisfaction reported by the three groups in their current situation were looked at first.

DIAGRAM 4.16

COMPARISON OF SATISFACTION LEVELS REPORTED BY
EACH GROUP IN THEIR CURRENT SITUATION

Reporting Stage	Group A	B	C
Pre-break	67.6		
Break		73.6	
Post-break			73.9

There is not a great difference between the scores, as measured by the visual analogue scales. Working mothers and women at home with children were almost equally satisfied with their current situation, while women in the pre-break stage appeared a little less satisfied.

Table 4.17 lists the sources of satisfaction reported by the women in each stage. For women at home with children, fulfilment of the motherhood role was overwhelmingly the most important source of satisfaction, and was reported by 95% of women.

TABLE 4.17

MAIN SOURCES OF SATISFACTION ASSOCIATED WITH CURRENT SITUATION

Sources of Satisfaction	Group A Pre-break	Group B Break	Group C	
			At Work Post-break	In Role as Working Mother
Job Satisfaction	75%	-	38%	23%
Social Interaction	51%	8%	57%	16%
Resource Utilization	43%	-	53%	-
Intellectual Stimulation	21%	-	25%	11%
Work Environment	20%	-	20%	-
Financial Benefits	13%	-	39%	48%
Career Prospects	13%	-	4%	-
Self Image	10%	-	17%	20%
Independence	8%	-	22%	23%
Fulfilment of Motherhood Role	-	95%	-	-
Time Issues	-	20%	-	-
Interest Outside The Home	-	-	22%	-
Confidence	-	-	4%	8%
Family Benefits	-	-	-	49%
'Having the Best of Both Worlds'	-	-	-	9%

Women wrote about the benefits of motherhood in glowing terms:

'I find motherhood the most natural job I have ever
done. The reward being love'.

'Enjoying the development of the childern. Having
time to spend with them, playing, reading, teaching,
loving them and getting to know them.'

'Seeing her grow every day. She makes me ever so
proud to be her mother.'

'I have 2 very active intelligent children & it is a
delight to watch their progress . I feel fulfilled
as a mother'

20% of women at home saw time issues as a source of
satisfaction. This is particularly interesting because
approximately 40% saw this as a problem. Those who emphasised
the benefits related it to being able to organise their time to suit
themselves. For example:

'Enjoying a more relaxed lifestyle. Time for hobbies,
gardening etc.'

'Flexible hours, lack of the usual rigid work routine.'

'Freedom to organise days to my satisfaction, with
the time to involve myself in interests and groups.'

A small number, 8%, saw social interaction as one of the benefits of their current situation. Again, it also appeared as a problem for some of the women, in that 14% saw the lack of social interaction as a source of stress. The benefits were seen mainly in terms of being able to develop a network of friends in a similar situation. Social interaction was seen as the most important source of satisfaction for women at work post-break, and, after satisfaction derived from the nature of the actual work, it was also reported as a benefit by 51% of women at the pre-break stage. Resource utilization refers to the extent to which women were able to 'make the most' of their skills and training thus deriving satisfaction from a job well done and perhaps reflecting the high levels of education in the group. It refers specifically to the feelings of satisfaction associated with the use of knowledge and skills acquired through training. For example:

'Sense of achievment when pupils do well - produce
good work that I've been instrumental in initiating.'

'Using my skills to help other people cope with
mental illness/stress problems.'

'Successfully solving client's problems. '

Intellectual stimulation, the work environment, financial benefits, career prospects, self image and independence were all reported as sources of satisfaction by women at work both before and after the career break. A number of these was also seen as important by women in their role as working mothers. Two factors, though,

were listed only by women in this latter group. These were family benefits and 'having the best of both worlds'. The former refers to the extent to which the whole family was seen as benefiting by the woman's return to work, in terms of her ability to contribute both intellectually (ie being a more interesting person) and financially. The latter refers to the satisfaction that women derived from being able to participate in both the home and work environment. Interest outside the home (22%) was only put forward as a benefit by women at work post-career break.

2) As illustrated in Diagram 4.18, a comparison was also made between current experience of satisfaction and anticipated or retrospective assessments **at each stage**.

DIAGRAM 4.18

COMPARISON OF ACTUAL EXPERIENCE OF SATISFACTION (CURRENT SITUTION) ▨
WITH ANTICIPATED AND RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENTS AT EACH REPORTING STAGE

Reporting Stage	Group A	B	C
Pre-break	67.6	70.1 ←	68.1 ← ←
Break	72.2 →	73.6	65.5 ←
Post-break	61.4 → →	59.1 →	73.9

The data was analysed in the same way as the stress data, but no particular pattern was found when comparing actual with retrospective satisfaction scores. Retrospective assessments of the first stage by Groups B and C appear reasonably accurate, but when looking back to being at home with children, the benefits are not so clear. However, when the totals for actual experience of satisfaction at that stage (221.4) were compared with anticipated satisfaction (192.7), it appears that the benefits of the situation are not foreseen (see Table 4.19). This was particularly evident in looking forward to post-break employment. (Although the stress levels anticipated by Group A women, when looking ahead to the

next stage, are comparable to those reported by the Group B women, currently in that stage). OIt would seem, then, that women in the pre-break employment stage, and women at home with children, overestimate the size of the problem at the post-break stage, but underestimate its benefits.

TABLE 4.19 COMPARISON OF ACTUAL AND ANTICIPATED APPRAISAL OF SATISFACTION (BY STAGE)

	Actual	Anticipated
	73.6	72.2
	73.9	61.4
	73.9	59.1
Totals	221.4	192.7

Table 4.20 shows the factors reported by women as contributing to their satisfaction at work during the pre-career break. Those listed by Group A refer to their current situation, while Groups B and C were making a retrospective assessment. Without exception, the same factors were reported by all three groups when looking at the sources of satisfaction in pre-break employment. No consistent pattern was found in the retrospections, but social interaction and resource utilization were accurately assessed by Groups B and C. Job satisfaction was slightly underestimated, while intellectual stimulation and work environment were not

seen to be as important as they actually were. Women in the career break, looking back to prior work experience, overestimated the importance of self image and independence, although these were fairly accurately assessed by Group C. However, 39% of Group C women put forward financial benefits as a factor having contributed to their satisfaction at the pre-break stage, although it was listed by only 13% of women actually in that stage.

TABLE 4.20   FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SATISFACTION AT WORK

SOURCES OF SATISFACTION ASSOCIATED WITH WORK SITUATION – PRE-CAREER BREAK			
Factors	Group A Pre-break Current situation	Group B Break Looking back one stage	Group C Post-break Looking back two stages
Job Satisfaction	75%	66%	63%
Social Interaction	51%	54%	57%
Resource Utilization	43%	45%	43%
Intellectual Stimulation	21%	19%	15%
Work Environment	20%	15%	11%
Financial Benefits	13%	13%	39%
Career Prospects	13%	2%	6%
Self Image	10%	26%	13%
Independence	8%	15%	8%

Table 4.21, below, compares the anticipated, actual and retrospective benefits of staying at home with children. The most important factor, fulfilment of the motherhood role, was accurately predicted as well as being accurately assessed retrospectively. 20% of women reported time issues as a benefit, but although it was predicted, it was listed by only 11% of women in Group A. Social interaction however, was not anticipated as a benefit at all, possibly because women at the pre-break stage perceive being at home with children as an isolating experience. Indeed, 43% saw the lack of social interaction as a potential source of stress (see Table 4.13, p. 179).

TABLE 4.21

BENEFITS OF STAYING AT HOME WITH CHILDREN			
Benefits	Group A Pre-break (anticipated)	Group B Break (current)	Group C Post-break (retrospective)
Fulfilment of Motherhood Role	98%	95%	97%
Time issues	11%	20%	17%
Social Interaction	-	8%	19%

TABLE 4.22

BENEFITS OF WORK POST-CAREER BREAK				
Benefits	Group A Pre-break (anticipated)	Group B Break (anticipated)	Group C Post-break (current)	
			At work	In role as working mother
Financial Benefits	59%	65%	39%	48%
Social Interaction	32%	23%	57%	16%
Independence	29%	11%	22%	23%
Intellectual Stimulation	27%	24%	25%	11%
Self Image	21%	33%	17%	20%
Work Environment	14%	-	20%	-
Resource Utilization	13%	13%	53%	-
'Having the Best of Both Worlds'	13%	-	-	9%
Career prospects	9%	5%	4%	-
Confidence	3%	10%	4%	8%
Interest outside the Home	-	19%	22%	-
Family Benefits	-	18%	-	49%
Job Satisfaction	9%	14%	38%	23%

Table 4.22 shows the anticipated and actual benefits of returning to work post-career break, and also the benefits of being a working mother for those currently experiencing that role. It is interesting that self image was overestimated as a benefit by Group B, as it had also been seen as more important than it actually was in their retrospective assessment of the pre-break stage (see Table 4.20). Responses to the question 'What do you think the benefits or rewards (of returning to work) might be?' included;

'Ego satisfaction. Sense of worth. Sense of separate identity/importance apart from as a wife and mother.'

'I would become an individual again. Not so-and-so's mummy or so-and-so's wife.'

However, neither of the women making these comments had mentioned low self image as a problem associated with their current situation.

4.5 THE DECISION TO RETURN

The three groups were asked questions which related specifically to the decision to return to work after the career break.

1)   The women in Group A were asked whether they intended to take maternity leave, or whether they anticipated taking a longer period out of employment when they had a child. They were then asked to state their reasons for making this choice. Tables 4.23

and 4.24 show the factors involved.

TABLE 4.23   REASONS FOR WANTING TO TAKE MATERNITY LEAVE

GROUP A PRE-CAREER BREAK		
Factors	Numbers	% of those responding
Financial Issues	22	71%
Frustration of Repetitive Routine/Boredom	14	45%
Job Satisfaction	9	29%
Intellectual Stimulation	5	16%
Career Demands	4	13%
Self image	4	13%
Independence	3	10%
Social Interaction	3	10%

N.B. %'s do not add up to 100 because women gave more than one response

TABLE 4.24 REASONS FOR WANTING TO TAKE A LONGER PERIOD OFF WORK

GROUP A PRE-CAREER BREAK		
REASONS FOR WANTING TO TAKE A LONGER PERIOD OFF WORK (anticipated)		
Factors	Numbers	% of those responding
Fulfilment of Motherhood Role	30	86%
Duty	16	46%
Anticipated Role Conflict/ Overload	3	9%

Fulfilment of motherhood role and anticipated role conflict/overload were factors that had arisen in relation to other questions - the former in the context of the satisfactions associated with staying at home with children, and the latter in relation to the stresses of post-break employment. It is not surprising, therefore, that they should be put forward as reasons for wanting to take a longer period off work. However, a number of women also mentioned issues relating in some way to duty/responsibility. For example:

'I feel that if you have a child then it is a persons responsibility to look after their child. .... I feel a child needs its natural

mother.'

'Although I value my independence highly
now, I feel that my commitment to a 'family'
should be 100%, as is my commitment to work
presently. I feel it would be my duty to be at
home looking after my child - at least initially '

'I chose (b) (wanting to take a longer time
off work) because I want to be with my
children when they are growing up. I don't
want someone to look after them while I'm
out at work - I don't think it is right. A
mother should be with her child while it
is growing up.'

2)   Group B women, currently in the career break, were asked
whether or not they intended returning to work in the foreseeable
future. Their reasons for answering positively or negatively are
presented in Tables 4.25 and 4.26.

TABLE 4.25   REASONS FOR WANTING TO RETURN TO WORK

GROUP B   CAREER BREAK

MAIN REASONS FOR WANTING TO RETURN TO WORK

Reasons	Numbers	% of those responding
Financial Benefits	29	45%
Interest outside the Home	23	36%
Decreasing Family Dependence	19	30%
Intellectual Stimulation	17	27%
Social Interaction	14	22%
Self Image	11	17%
Career Demands	11	17%
Job Satisfaction	9	14%
Resource Utilization	8	12%
Independence	7	11%

TABLE 4.26   REASONS FOR NOT WANTING TO RETURN TO WORK

GROUP B CAREER BREAK		
REASONS FOR NOT WANTING TO RETURN TO WORK		
Reasons	Numbers	% of those responding
Fulfilment of Motherhood Role	16	64%
Anticipation of Role Conflict/Overload	12	48%
Dependent Children	8	32%

The reasons given for choosing to stay at home for a longer period were mixed. 64% of women put forward the fulfilment of motherhood role as a factor in their choice. However, 48% anticipated role conflict and/or role overload if they returned, and 32% did not want to return while they had dependent children.

3) Group C were asked to state their main reasons for deciding to return to work. These are listed in Table 4.27.

TABLE 4.27   MAIN REASONS FOR DECIDING TO RETURN TO WORK

GROUP C POST-CAREER BREAK		
MAIN REASONS FOR DECIDING TO RETURN TO WORK		
Reasons	Numbers	% of those responding
Financial Benefits	63	81%
Social Interaction	23	30%
External Interests	22	28%
Intellectual Stimulation	18	23%
Career Demands	18	23%
Job Satisfaction	12	15%
Decreasing Family Dependence	12	15%
Self Image	7	9%
Independence	7	9%
Resource Utilization	7	9%
Confidence	3	4%
Work Environment	2	3%

4.6 TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS

Group B were asked if there was any specific help, information or training that they thought would be useful to them before returning to work. Of the 91 women in the group, 30 said 'NO', 1 said 'DON"T KNOW' and 10 indicated that the question was not applicable to them because they did not intend returning in the foreseeable future. 50 answered in the affirmative, and went on to give details:

TABLE 4.28   SPECIFIC HELP REQUIRED

GROUP B CAREER BREAK		
SPECIFIC HELP/INFORMATION/TRAINING THAT WOULD BE USEFUL BEFORE RETURNING TO WORK		
Specified help	numbers	% of those responding
Refresher Course/Retraining	21	46%
New Qualifications/skills	19	41%
Career Advice	13	28%
Assertiveness Training	5	11%

4.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

The return to work can be looked at in more detail by considering the decision-making model raised in the Introduction and discussed further in Chapter 3. It was argued that a decision would be made based on a weighing up of the previously experienced, actual and anticipated costs and benefits of the home and work environments. The meaning that these costs and benefits had for the women was interpreted through their reported stresses and satisfactions. Thus when the anticipated satisfactions of work and the stresses of home outweighed the satisfactions of home and the anticipated stresses of work, then, depending on the time constraints involved, a woman might decide to 'go back to work'. However, if, as found in this survey, women are inaccurate in their anticipation of the stresses and satisfactions associated with work, in that the former is overestimated and the latter tends towards underestimation, then this could have a considerable impact on their decision to return. In other words, they might postpone re-entry into the labour market because of an inaccurate appraisal of the factors involved. It was therefore decided to investigate this further by attempting to measure how accurate the women were in anticipating the problems of returning to work.

It was hypothesized that the longer the women had been away from the work environment, the less accurate they would be in their judgement of the future situation.

Information had not been requested on the length of time that the career-break women had been at home. However, they were asked

if they had worked since the birth of their first child, and it was decided to use the 43 women who had not done so, to test this hypothesis. The number of years away from work, for these women, was therefore assumed to be equal to the age of their eldest child. In order to test the accuracy of the women's judgement, it was then necessary to identify, or calculate, a reference score with which to compare their anticipated stress scores. A score for each woman was therefore calculated based on the individual's current experience of stress, the mean stress score for that group, and the current stress scores for the post-break group:

$$\text{cal. stress score} = \frac{\text{ind. stress score}}{\text{mean stress score}} \times \text{mean stress score post-break group}$$

The discrepancy between these two scores - anticipated stress and calculated stress - was then taken to be a good indication of the accuracy of their judgement. A simple hypothesis was therefore postulated: the older the eldest child, the more the person would overestimate the problems of going back to work ie. there would be a positive correlation between age of eldest child and discrepancy score. However, these calculations are only valid if certain assumptions can be made:

1) Although three different groups are being studied at different times in their life stages, it is assumed that they come from the

same population - ie. what group C is reporting now will not be dissimilar to what group B would be reporting in the next stage.

2)   It is assumed that the age of the eldest child is an accurate indication of the length of time this group of women have been away from work.

3) Given 1, then it is reasonable to work on the basis that the ratio of individual score to group mean is constant.

A Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed to test the stated hypothesis, but the results were not found to be significant for the whole group ($r = 0.04$; $n = 43$; $p = NS$). However, on closer examination of the raw data, it became apparent that responses from 7 of the subjects were extreme, and did not form part of the general pattern or distribution of scores. These were then identified and removed from the sample. Using data from the remaining 36 subjects the correlation was repeated, and found to be significant ($r = 0.37$; $n = 36$; $p = 0.03$). A moderate positive correlation was therefore found between age of eldest child and the discrepancy score, indicating, to some extent, that the longer women stay away from work the more likely they are to overestimate the problems of returning.

Although the 7 women who were excluded from the sample did not differ from the others in terms of age, age of children or educational qualifications, there was some indication that they had either no support or extremely low financial support from their partners. Within this group (although only comprising 7) no

consistent prediction of their anticipated levels of stress could be made from from their current scores. While being happy and relaxed in the home environment, it appears that they had not given much thought to the future. Their answers were not consistent, and it was not, therefore, possible to predict their levels of stress. Table X shows the mean stress scores for the whole group, N = 43, the outliers, N = 7, and the whole group minus the outliers, N = 36, as well as highlighting the areas of difference between them.

TABLE 4.29

MEANS FOR WHOLE GROUP (N = 43), 'OUTLIERS' (N = 7), AND WHOLE GROUP MINUS 'OUTLIERS' (N = 36)

	N = 43	N = 36	N = 7
Age of Oldest Child	3.3	3.3	3.3
Current Stress	39.3	37.9	46.6
Anticipated Work Stress	56.0	58.3	44.0
Calculated Work Stress	48.1	46.4	57.0
Discrepancy	7.9	12.0	-13.0 *
Partner's Financial Support	Predominantly Good	Very Good	Poor
Home Satisfaction	76.1	74.5	84.4

* Range from - 94.5 to 97.8   SD = 93.352

The hypotheseis that the longer the women stayed away from work (as measured by the age of their eldest child), the more likely they were to overestimate the problems of returning, can therefore be said to have been supported. This clearly has implications for the

training of women returners, and will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

4.8 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN SURVEY

A comparison was made between the stress and satisfaction levels of the three groups of women in their current situations - i.e. pre-break, break and post-break. A significant difference was found between the stress levels but not the satisfaction levels, with women at home experiencing less stress both before and after the break (this will be discussed further in Chapter 6). Hypothesis 1 was therefore supported for stress but not for satisfaction. However, in comparison to the satisfaction scores, stress levels were relatively low (see section 4.3), and the women could therefore be seen as experiencing more satisfaction than stress in their current roles.

In relation to stress, Hypothesis 3 was supported for Groups B and C (women at home with children and those who had returned to work after a break) in that their stress levels differed depending on whether they were anticipating a stage, currently experiencing it or looking back on it. However, when asked to look ahead to the next two stages, Group A (pre-break) anticipated their stress levels being maintained at a similar, and relatively high, level to that which they were currently experiencing. Again, little difference was found in satisfaction levels.

A broad range of factors emerged from analysis of the qualitative data, and these clearly highlight the concerns and worries, as well

as the satisfactions, that many women feel as they progress through the identified life stages. These factors can be seen to broadly reflect the categories identified in the preliminary studies, and thus lend support to Hypothesis 3.

In their assessments of the pre-break stage, women identified several sources of stress (see Table 4.8) and these same factors were reported by all three groups of women whether they were currently in stage 1 or making a retrospective assessment. A further factor, role conflict/overload, was put forward by the latter two groups, but was not experienced as a source of stress by women actually in that stage. It is interesting that when reporting current sources of stress, this factor was only seen as a problem by working mothers, although it was seen by the other two groups as a problem associated with post-break employment. It could be that anticipating this as a problem in future employment (Group B) and experiencing it in their roles as working mothers (Group C), it becomes associated with the work situation more generally. It could also be argued that the social framework within which women perceive work, at all stages in their development, places undue emphasis on role conflict. Perhaps this conflict is expected by women, in the sense that they will inevitably receive messages about women's roles from primary caretakers and peers, which, together with cultural expectations, may lead them to anticipate such conflict. All situations might then be examined for evidence of it, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophesy about expectations and perceptions of role conflict.

The same factors were identified, in varying degrees, by all three

groups assessing the pre-break stage. However, financial benefits were perceived very differently by the different groups. Approximately three times as many women in Group C saw this factor as a source of satisfaction, compared with the other two groups. Perhaps because many of the women had returned to work for financial reasons, this factor was more salient to them, and therefore became associated with the work situation, pre-break.

The results highlighted some of the problems that women associated with being at home (see Table 4.13, p. 179). Children's demands, in particular, were seen as a major source of stress for women in this stage as well as for working mothers (See also Stress Survey, Chapter 3, Section. 3.8). Killien & Brown (1987) looked at sources of stress in multiple role women, and also found child related issues to be high on the problem list. Children's behaviour was the single most frequently reported hassle by both married and single working mothers, and it was also ranked highly by the nonemployed homemakers. Stevens and Meleis (1991), looking at similar issues, concluded that worry over children is one of the greatest adversities faced by parents.

Not much has been written in recent years about the positive aspects of the home role. Compared to the stresses, not as many factors emerged in relation to the satisfactions of the role. Nevertheless, in their retrospective and anticipated assessments as well as in their reporting of their present circumstances, the women consistently identified three factors as contributing to the benefits of being at home with children. These were:- fulfilment of the motherhood role; time issues and social interaction. The

importance placed on 'fulfilment of the motherhood role' could perhaps be seen in terms of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), given that the main reason the women were at home was because they had had children.

It is interesting that as well as being identified as benefits, the other two factors, time issues and social interaction were also associated with the stresses of being at home. It does seem that for some women, being at home with children is an isolating experience. According to Richardson (1993), this has resulted from changes in the pattern of family and domestic life which have deprived mothers of the social opportunities that once existed. The home, she argues, has now become a much more private place - separated from the world of work and entertainment, with fewer people likely to be around during the day and relatives often living long distances away.   Others, however, actually see social interaction as an important benefit of the home situation. It might be that those in this latter category have a larger support network, a factor that can perhaps mitigate against the more negative experiences of the home role. It could also be that these women enjoy better financial circumstances, have more access to transport, and are therefore better able to maintain and nurture social relationships while at home with children.

The seeming contradiction of time as both a stress and a benefit was explored in detail in the preliminary research (Chapter 3), and this was again found to be an issue for Group B women in the main survey. However, all groups identified Time Issues as a source of stress. The importance of 'time' as a factor for the women is

perhaps not surprising. George (1991) argues that the experience of time is one mechanism through which work experiences may affect well-being throughout life. More specifically, time has frequently been identified as an important variable in the interface between job and home (Pleck & Staines, 1982; Fournier & Engelbrecht, 1982; Voydanoff & Kelly, 1984; Repetti, 1987; Emmons, Biernat, Tiedje, Lang & Wortman, 1990; Burley, 1991). Emmons et al., for example, looked at 135 professional women with pre-school children and found that the problems they experienced both at home and at work were primarily related to a shortage of time. Women have also been found to experience more time based conflict than men (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Lewis & Cooper, 1987; Loerch, Russell & Rush, 1989), even when other factors have been controlled, and Griffith (1983a) found that a lack of personal time was the major stressor of women under 35 and the second major stressor for those over 35. Marlow (1988) reported similar findings in a large-scale study of working women with multiple role responsibilities - 52% of the sample felt that they did not have enough time for themselves. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, it has more frequently been viewed as a negative factor, and looked at in terms of the constraints that women experience in carrying out a number of different roles. In this context, it can be related to role overload. As Wiersma and Van Den Berg (1991) suggest, insufficient time to properley carry out one's role activities is an important result of role overload. It is interesting, then, that women with fewer roles - i.e working, married women without children and married women at home with children - as well as married working women, also reported time issues as a source of stress, although not to the same extent as

the latter group. As mentioned earlier, women, unlike men, experience their different roles simultaneously rather than sequentially, and it could be that as girls grow up and identify this in their mothers or other role models, time also becomes a salient factor for them.

As hypothesised, in looking at the return to work, the vast majority (92%) of women did plan to go back after the break. The major source of stress, both anticipated and experienced at this post-break stage was role conflict/overload. This will be looked at in more detail in the Discussion, but is explored in depth in Chapter 5. Other stress factors identified by the women included changing technology, readjustment to routine, lack of confidence, childcare facilities, finding suitable employment, unsupportive partner/colleagues, low status and time constraints. In comparison to the experience of the returners, the majority of these factors were greatly overestimated by the pre-break group. For example, 57% and 30% of women anticipated changing technology and readjustment to routine respectively, as stress factors at the post-break stage, whereas the corresponding figures for those women actually in that stage were 15% and 5%. This again highlights the fact that women anticipating decision-making feel that they are operating within an unstable environment.

In terms of the decision-making model put forward in the Introduction, the factors identified here help to clarify women's decision-making processes. These processes were further 'unpacked' by making a comparison of the women's retrospective,

current and anticipated assessments. The results of these analyses demonstrate an interesting pattern. Women, although expressing fairly high levels of satisfaction generally, tended to underestimate the potential satisfaction to be derived from future life stages. More specifically, it would seem that in looking forward to the return to work after the career break, women were unduly pessimistic. They overestimated the stresses involved at this stage as well as underestimating the benefits. The implications for the decision-making processes are clearly significant - if women see the factors involved at the post-break stage in such a negative light, they may postpone re-entry into the labour market.

The women's appraisal of past events were more in line with those made by women actually experiencing that stage, although in relation to stress, the size of the problem was often minimised. It might be that in looking back to problems that have now been overcome or are no longer relevant, women 're-adjust' their retrospective assessments in line with their current experience.

LOOKING AHEAD

It is, perhaps, a common assumption that women who work **and** have a family will be subject to role conflict, by the very nature of their situation. The dual role hypothesis predicts just this, but it could be argued that the theory gives unnatural weight to the role of wife and mother on the one hand, and worker on the other. The working mother, by definition, necessarily occupies more than one role. However, it might be the total role demand, rather than

any inherent conflict, that causes problems. The survey described in Chapter 5 investigates this issue.

CHAPTER 5   WORKING WOMEN AND ROLE CONFLICT

WORKING WOMEN AND ROLE CONFLICT

5.0 INTRODUCTION

It was demonstrated earlier (Chapter 4) that the retrospective, current and anticipated assessments that the women made when looking at the three identified stages formed part of the decision-making framework in which women considered the return to work. A number of meaningful factors, associated with the combined roles of housewife, mother and worker, were identified, and one in particular, role conflict/overload, was seen as a major source of stress. It was therefore decided to explore this in more detail.

Although role conflict and role overload were not separated out in the survey they are not interchangeable and the existence of one does not necessarily indicate the existence of the other. Nevertheless, they do appear to have been used interchangeably in much of the literature (Coverman, 1989), and while there is some overlap, they can be differentiated. Conflict occurs between roles when a person occupies two or more positions simultaneously, and the pressures and expectations of one role are incompatible with the pressures and expectations that arise within another role (Sarbin & Allen, 1968; Kopelman, Greenhaus & Connolly, 1983; Coverman, 1989). Role overload can be defined as having too many role demands and too little time to fulfil them (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Baruch, Biener & Barnett, 1985). The literature does seem to suggest that the higher the overload, the greater the likelihood of role conflict, but according to Coverman (1989) role

overload is likely to lead to role conflict only when the demands of one of the multiple roles makes it difficult to fulfil the demands of another. She suggests that this is more likely to occur in situations where no alternative mechanisms exist to help individuals carry out their different roles. Nevertheless, both concepts have been linked with stress and poor well-being in women (Leslie, 1989). These issues clearly raise the question of whether the adoption of multiple roles are beneficial or hazardous to women's health.

The simple dual role hypothesis focuses specifically on role conflict, and sees the combined roles of housewife and worker as the main source of stress for working women. It predicts that role conflict is the inevitable result of such a lifestyle. A number of explanations have been put forward in support of this. It has been suggested that identity issues and role cycling issues (Rapaport and Rapaport, 1976) can affect the degree of stress experienced by women who adopt a work role in addition to their mothering role. This might occur because women experience discontinuity between their early gender role socialisation and their current practices, a form of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), in which behaviour is inconsistent with the values internalised early in childhood.

Clearly, pressures on women who work outside the home do not come solely from the work environment. Although more women are now sharing the provider role with their partners, men are not adopting the domestic role so easily, and consequently give their partners little support (Voydanoff, 1988; Shelton & Firestone, 1988; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). Even where a woman pursues a

career of an equal or higher status to that of her partner, inequalities still exist as to the division of labour in the home (see Chapter 1), with the female having primary responsibility in this area (Ferber, 1982; Berk, 1985; Berardo, Shehan & Leslie, 1987; Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Nelson, Quick, Hitt & Moesel, 1990; Biernat & Wortman, 1991), and as Menaghan & Parcel (1990) report, low spouse participation in household work is generally associated with greater distress for wives.

It is often the woman who compromises her career in order to accommodate the needs of the family. One reason for this might be the lack of dual role parental models to demonstrate effective problem solutions. The result is that many women carry a heavy burden in their attempt to meet expectations based on traditional norms, as well as supporting the dual career relationship and the conflicts and demands arising from it (Nadelson and Nadelson 1980). It is also the woman who more often takes risks, makes sacrifices, and compromises her career aspirations in order to make the dual career pattern operative (Bernard 1974). Poor community resources, such as inadequate childcare facilities, simply add to the stresses and strains that women already endure (Holahan and Gilbert 1979; Ross & Mirowsky, 1988; Stevens & Meleis, 1991). Furthermore, women's roles tend to operate simultaneously, while the multiple roles of men tend to operate sequentially (Hall 1972). This is an important concept, and one that, according to Duxbury and Higging (1991), appears to be just as valid in the 1990's as it was in the 1970's. Indeed, a recent study (Williams, Suls, Alliger, Learner & Wan, 1991) has shown that simultaneously attending to the demands of different roles,

or role-juggling, had immediate negative effects on task enjoyment and mood for a sample of employed mothers.

Rapaport and Rapaport (1976) suggest that there are four factors which, in part, determine the degree of overload and strain experienced by individuals. These are: the degree to which having children and a family life is salient; the degree to which a high standard of living is aspired to; the degree to which there is a satisfactory reapportionment of tasks and the degree to which social-psychological overload is compounded by physical overload. Although three of these factors are still relevant today, the second, relating to a high standard of living, seems to imply that only those women who aspire to such standards would consider taking paid employment outside the home, with the attendant risk of overload and strain. Clearly this is not the case, and many women, in relationships as well as those who are single mothers, feel they have to work in order simply to make ends meet.

Cooke and Rosseau (1984), suggest that although work expectations may be related to overload and role conflict, the issue of family role expectations is more complex. Family role expectations interact with work role expectations on measures of role conflict, with such conflict being progressively greater as women move from being single, to being married, to having children. This fits in with research showing that the degree of role conflict and overload experienced by women varies between different stages in their life cycle, with the dilemma between career role and family role being most acute at the time of childbirth (Fogarty, Rapaport and Rapaport 1971). Cooke and

Rosseau (1984) also found a negative relationship between family demands and physical strain, with family demands offsetting potential strain from work demands, thus supporting the social support theory of role conflict. However, other studies have, in contrast, identified the role of 'parent' rather than 'paid worker' as that which results in the greatest degree of stress for many women (Barnett and Baruch 1985), and indeed, results from the stress survey (Chapter 3) support this.

Despite the problems that many women encounter in their roles as working mothers, much of the research has found few, if any differences between employed and non-employed women on a number of variables (e.g. mother-child relations and marital quality), but a considerable number of benefits for those in employment (Piotrkowski & Repetti, 1984). Barnett and Baruch (1985) found no differences in the degree of role conflict, role overload or anxiety in the two groups. Neither have any differences been found in life satisfaction between housewives and women in full time employment (Weaver and Holmes, 1975). More recent research suggests that the combination of employment and domestic roles is actually beneficial to women's physical and psychological health (Ross, Mirowsky & Goldsteen, 1990; Arber, 1991; Hibbard & Pope, 1991). Work can thus be seen as a positive health factor which, in turn, can reflect on the family as a whole. Working mothers have been identified as displaying many positive characteristics to their children, such as less coercive discipline, empathy and a strong role model offering an alternative to traditional norms (Nadelson and Nadelson 1980). It has been argued that employment can not only give women a work identity

(Sorenson & Verbrugge, 1987) and the opportunity to obtain the resources and privileges attached to another role, but also provide them with social support, satisfaction, positive feedback, and enhanced self esteem and well-being (Majewski, 1986, Pietromonaco, Manis & Frohardt-Lane, 1986; Waldron & Jacobs, 1989; Hibbard & Pope, 1991).

However, as mentioned above, there are clearly problems for the working mother, and a number of studies have found that the extra demands created by involvement in multiple roles can engender psychological distress (Kamerman, 1980; 1983; Herlihy, 1984; Krause, 1984; Kandel, Davies, & Raveis, 1985; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). More recent research has tried to make sense of these inconsistent findings by focusing on the more complex interactions between different variables in the equation. For instance, Rosenfield (1989) suggests that such inconsistencies may be related to the interaction between the greater power and resources that employment can offer and the demands that women can be faced with in both their home and work spheres. More specifically, she suggests that women may fail to benefit from employment because the greater personal control in terms of power is gained at the expense of the loss of control in terms of demands. Through changes in the balance of power and control then, role overload can offset the benefits to be gained from greater role diversity. It has also been suggested that the degree to which women's mental health is affected by the work situation differs according to their involvement in other arenas. So for those women who do not have alternative roles from which they can obtain benefits, the rewards but also the disappointments of

employment can have a greater impact (Baruch & Barnett, 1987; Waldron & Jacobs, 1988; Barnett & Marshall, 1991). This would suggest that multiple role involvement is beneficial to women because it provides them with more than one arena in which they can obtain potential rewards. Also, if role quality is poor in one area, it might matter less to those women who can turn elsewhere. A recent study (Barnett, Marshall & Singer, 1992) found that family roles, in particular, protected women against changes in their job-role quality.

Inconsistent or contradictory findings may also be related to the fact that not all women are in employment for the same reason. While for some the satisfactions of work and a career may mitigate the negative effects of possible role conflict and overload, others may not be working from choice but for purely financial reasons, and thus may view the situation very differently (Sholomskas & Axelrod, 1986). The quality of roles outside the work environment also needs to be taken into consideration, but theorists usually focus only on the 'home' role. The many other roles that women fulfil - e.g. daughter, sister, voluntary worker, churchgoer etc. - tend to be forgotten in the work/motherhood debate. Even within the 'home' role, the roles of wife and mother are often lumped together, but this can be misleading. Hornstein (1986), in a study of 96 women, found that for all subjects, involvement in the 'world of wife' was considerably less variable than was involvement in the 'world of mothering'. She highlights the importance of recognising that although we might often think of them as being related, they are not necessarily experienced as related.

It has sometimes been argued that for many working women, part-time work would be the ideal. For instance, Rosenfield (1989) argues that it can bring the benefits of greater familial power without the overload of work responsibilities. Unfortunately, this is not always a viable option, as many women have great difficulty in finding appropriate or well paid part-time work, and those who do are often exploited. Cox and Cox (1988) suggest that solutions such as part time working may not, in any case, be appropriate for all working women as they cannot be seen as an homogeneous group. Working women, they argue, can be divided into three sectors: those who are well qualified and hold skilled technical, managerial or professional jobs; those who are not well qualified and hold poorly paid, low status jobs, and those who are not working but would like to do so. A global solution cannot be applied to avoid role conflict and overload - while part-time work may be a favourable option for the high status worker, it can lead to feelings of exploitation in the low status, poorly paid employee. Such work can undermine any sense of personal achievment and advancement that women might feel, and can also foster economic dependence on spouses (Ferree, 1976; Pleck, 1985; Thompson & Walker, 1989).

One factor found to be important in determining the degree of stress experienced, is whether a woman is pursuing a career as opposed to performing a job for extrinsic rewards only. The experience of role conflict has been found to be greater in non-career women with low prestige jobs, than in career women with higher prestige jobs (Baruch, Biener & Barnett, 1987). This

has been attributed to greater aspirations, work satisfaction, work commitment and spouse support in the latter (Holahan and Gilbert 1979; Repetti & Crosby, 1984). Although career women experience a high level of role demands, it has been argued that the satisfactions and rewards gained from the career role help to mitigate the experience of role conflict. Lieber (1980), in a study of thirty professional women who were also wives and mothers, found that the rewards they gained from professional achievment were worth the required effort and sacrifices. Holahan and Gilbert (1979) also found that career women experienced greater satisfaction than non career women for all of their life roles. It may be that the latter were less willing to relinquish part of their roles as wives and mothers, thus resulting in less time for attention to 'self' and 'work' roles and a higher possibility of role conflict. On the other hand, career women may have prioritised their roles. Higher levels of satisfaction among working wives have also been found where job involvement is high (Gannon and Hunt Hendrickson 1973; Chambers, 1989).

Results from the main survey indicated that role conflict and overload were seen as major sources of stress for working mothers and for those anticipating the return to employment after a break for children. A number of working women without children also talked about this phenomenon in relation to their current situation - a finding which highlights the fact that women do not have to be working mothers to occupy a number of different roles and experience conflict between them. The effects of holding multiple roles are clearly complex, and, as seen above, can be influenced by many factors both internal and external to the

individual and to the home environment. Conflict may occur between different roles, and the demands generated by each role can lead to role overload, and if conditions permit, subsequent conflict. The latter, it has been argued, would only arise if the demands of one role made it difficult to fulfil the demands of another, but if there are high levels of demand in one or more of the roles, time issues might prevent an individual fulfilling the demands of all her roles, and thus lead to conflict.

The dual role theory would suggest that conflict arises inevitably as a result of women holding the roles of wife and mother on the one hand, and paid employee on the other. It might be, though, that conflict arises for the working woman simply as the result of the addition of another role to an already multiple role lifestyle. It was decided to investigate these issues further by exploring the effects of family demands and job demands on the experience of role conflict and health.

AIMS

1) The dual role hypothesis suggests that being both a 'housewife and mother' and also a 'worker' is experienced by many women as being particularly stressful. The primary objective of this survey was to explore the relationship between the experience of role conflict, and family and job demands, and to discover whether those with high job and family demands experienced more role conflict than those with less demanding jobs and fewer family demands and commitments.

2) It has usually been assumed in the literature - and certainly supported by the surveys undertaken so far - that role conflict is associated with stress. This, in turn, has been linked with poor health, but the relationship between these concepts is not always clear. Although general well-being was looked at in the preliminary research, the focus of the main survey was on stress and satisfaction. This final survey looks at the relationship between these factors, focussing specifically on the effects of role conflict on health and well-being.

3) It was also decided to examine the dual role theory in order to determine whether it was the number, or cumulative impact, of women's roles that could be said to determine their experience of stress, or the conflict between the two specific roles of 'housewife and mother' and 'worker'.

HYPOTHESES

Three particular hypotheses were tested during this study:

1) Married women with high career demands and high family commitments will experience greater role conflict than those with low career demands and low family commitments.

2) There will be an inverse relationship between the degree of role conflict experienced and general health.

3) The degree of role conflict experienced will be related to the cumulative role demands rather than to the concept of dual role

conflict.

5.1 METHOD

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The initial sample of 256 female subjects was selected at random from the headquarters telephone directory of a Civil Service department. The sample represented employees, aged between 16 and 65, with a wide range of jobs, most of whom were based in the London area. It was thus felt to be representative of white collar workers in general. The sample was divided by post hoc stratification into six groups according to the variables of family commitment and job level. The groups were expected to reflect the proportions in the population of white collar workers. As a result of this, they were found to be unequal in number, although there were enough subjects in each group to allow for the testing of homogeneity of variance.

After the initial contact stage, seven refusals were received and a further fifteen subjects were removed from the sample when it was found that they had left the department. Of the 234 questionnaires that were sent out, 162 completed questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 69%. Of these, all but one contained usable data on all measures.

The 162 women who made up the sample were aged between 19 and 64 (mean = 38.2, mode = 41, SD = 10.9). Table 5.1 illustrates the distribution of women between the six groups.

TABLE 5.1 PERCENTAGE OF SAMPLE IN EACH GROUP

	Family Commitment		
Job Level	Married, Dependent Children	Married, No Children	Single, No Children
Managerial/ Professional	10.5	30	67.2
Administrative/ Secretarial	8	8.7	16.1

Thus in terms of job level, the majority of subjects (67.2%) were in the managerial/professional category. In terms of family commitments, the largest group was made up of single women with no children (42.8%), closely followed by the married women with no children (38.7%).

GENERAL WELL-BEING OF THE SAMPLE

The scores of the sample on the General Well Being Questionnaire were compared to the international norms for British, female groups (Cox and Gotts 1988). The results show a slightly higher score for the present sample on Factor 1, 'Worn Out', but a considerably lower score on Factor 2, 'Uptight'. The women can therefore be seen to be experiencing more 'worn out' feelings, but

considerably less tension than the norm - very similar findings to that reported in the preliminary survey.

TABLE 5.2

MEAN GENERAL WELL-BEING SCORES		
	Factor 1 'Worn Out'	Factor 2 Tense or 'Uptight'
Present Sample	19.7	9.6
Norms for Females	17.4	12.8

DESIGN

As in the main survey, the study was based on a quasi-experimental, passive observational design (Cooke and Campbell 1979), in which it was not possible to make a random allocation of subjects to groups. Comparisons were therefore based on non-equivalent groups that could be expected to differ from one another on variables other than the independent variables. The potential methodological problems were reduced as far as possible through care in the design of the experiment, in particular, the use of control groups and the random selection of subjects. Certain background information, such as age, was required in order to judge the extent to which there was equivalence between the groups. Those factors that could not be

controlled for were measured and, where necessary, taken into account at the stage of statistical analysis by the use of Analysis of Covariance.

There were two independent variables :

1) **JOB LEVEL** - Managerial/professional (high), and administrative/secretarial (low).

2) **FAMILY COMMITMENT** - Married, with dependent children (high); married, no dependent children (moderate), and single, no dependent children (low).

TABLE 5.3   2 X 3 MATRIX SHOWING GROUPING BY JOB LEVEL AND FAMILY COMMITMENT

	Family Commitment		
Job Level	Married, Dependent Children	Married, No Children	Single, No Children
Managerial/ Professional	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Administrative/ Secretarial	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6

Subjects were grouped according to the variables of 'Family

Commitment' and 'Job Level', with those who were single, with no dependent children, acting as a control group. According to dual role theory, this group would be expected to experience less role conflict than married women both with and without dependent children. Those with lower job levels would also be expected to experience less role conflict than those with higher job levels.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

A theoretical review of previous work in the area of role conflict was undertaken, and following the principles outlined in Chapter 2, a pilot questionnaire was drafted and administered to 30 working women. On the basis of the pilot study, a number of minor modifications were made. The questionnaire was then sent to the Civil Service department involved in the study, giving them the opportunity to comment. A number of minor changes were made at this stage.

The questionnaire (see Appendix) is described in the Methodology Chapter (see section 2. 2).

Care was taken to ensure that possible confounding variables were controlled within the quasi-experimental design. Since the groups would be expected to be at different stages in their life progression, the possibility of age differences between them needed to be taken into consideration. Analysis of variance was used to test this out, but no age differences were found. Educational and socio-economic status were regarded as being implicit in the 'job level' variable.

PROCEDURE

Subjects were notified prior to the distribution of the questionnaire to give them some indication of the purpose of the study, and allow them the opportunity to refuse to participate. Two weeks after the initial contact letter had been sent, the questionnaires were distributed by post to all those in the sample who had not refused to take part or had not, to our knowledge, terminated their employment with the department. Stamped, addressed envelopes marked 'private and confidential' were included in the mailing. Two weeks later, reminder letters were sent to all respondents. The data was then collated and analysed (see results section below).

5.2 RESULTS

The results are outlined with reference to the three stated hypotheses. HYPOTHESIS 1 is related to the distribution of role conflict according to the independent variables of 'job level' and 'family commitment'. According to the hypothesis, the degree of role conflict would be expected to rise in line with the level of family commitment and job level.

1) NUMBER OF ROLE CONFLICTS

Subjects were requested to identify which role conflicts they experienced from a list of three suggestions, and were then asked to add any others that they experienced. 161 subjects responded, with the number of role conflicts reported ranging from 0 to 8. The results were analysed using a two way, independent groups, ANOVA.

TABLE 5.4   MEAN NUMBER OF ROLE CONFLICTS BETWEEN GROUP

	Family Commitment		
Job Level	Married, Dependent Children	Married, No Children	Single, No Children
Managerial/ Professional	3.5	3.6	3.3
Administrative/ Secretarial	2.8	3.1	2.7

Results indicated that the effects of the independent variable, job level, were significant (F = 9.90, df, 1,160, p < 0.01). No significant effect was found for the variable, family commitment and there was no significant interaction between the two.

Thus, a significantly higher number of role conflicts were experienced by women in managerial/professional jobs as opposed to those in administrative/secretarial jobs. However, there was no significant difference in the degree of role conflict reported by women with differing levels of family commitment, nor any effect of job level as reported by family commitment. The results can, therefore, be seen as lending only partial support to Hypothesis 1.

2) TOTAL ROLE CONFLICT

Subjects were requested to mark an appropriate point on a visual analogue scale between 0 and 100 to indicate how problematic they found each role conflict. 161 subjects responded, with total scores, from all completed scales, ranging from 0 to 608. The results were analysed using a two way, independent groups, ANOVA.

TABLE 5.5   MEAN TOTAL ROLE CONFLICT BETWEEN GROUPS

	Family Commitment		
Job Level	Married, dependent Children	Married, No Children	Single, No Children
Managerial/ Professional	168.5	156.6	127.9
Administrative/ Secretarial	89.6	129.3	106.7

Results from the ANOVA show the effect of the independent variable, job level, to be significant (F = 6.78, df 1, 160, p < 0.01). Again, no significant effect was found for the family commitment variable, and there was no significant interaction between the two. The results can again be seen as only partly supporting Hypothesis 1, in that those with higher job levels experienced more total role conflict, but there was no evidence to support the hypothesis that role conflict would rise in line with level of family commitment.

The distribution of scores for the lower job category was great enough to suggest that it might contain at least two sub populations. Those in this category were therefore further divided into those with low levels of role conflict (score < 100) and those with higher role conflict (score > 100), thus creating three job levels:

1) High Job Level- mean total role conflict:150.99.

2) Low Job Level, High Total Role Conflict - mean total role conflict: 167.32.

3) Low Job Level, Low Total Role Conflict - mean total role conflict: 37.94

Paired comparisons of the three job levels revealed significant differences between the 'Low Job Level, High Role Conflict', and 'Low Job Level, Low Role Conflict' groups (P < 0.01). Significant differences were also found between the 'Low Job Level, Low Role Conflict' group and the 'High Job level' Group (P < 0.01). No significant differences were found between the 'Low Job Level, High Role Conflict' group and the 'High Job Level' Group. A sub population of the low job level group reported similarly high levels. Thus there was no real effect of job level per se.

As above, Hypothesis 1 is only partly supported. Although the amount of role conflict experienced was generally greater for those with higher job levels, results indicate that the situation is more complex, with some respondents in the lower job level group experiencing degrees of role conflict similar to those of respondents in the higher job level group. Hypothesis 1 is not supported in terms of the experience of role conflict varying according to the level of family commitment.

The evidence, so far reviewed, offers little support for the dual role hypothesis. Family commitment appears to have no effect on

number of role conflicts reported, or on total role conflict, and although job level appears to have the predicted effect, there is some evidence that the effect is more complex and might not depend on job level per se. The alternative explanation takes in the notion that women fulfil multiple interacting roles, some of which may be supportive. This could explain the lack of simple differences reported above. In order to test out the multiple role hypothesis, the data were analysed in terms of the number of roles women reported, and the nature of the role conflicts.

3) NUMBER OF ROLES

Subjects were requested to indicate which roles from a list applied to them, and to add any more that had not been mentioned. 161 subjects responded, with the numbers of roles reported ranging from 2 to 11. The results were analysed using a two way, independent groups, ANOVA.

TABLE 5.6   MEAN NUMBER OF ROLES BETWEEN GROUPS

	Family Commitment		
Job Level	Married, dependent children	Married, no children	Single, no children
Managerial/ Professional	7.6	7.0	6.3
Administrative / Secretarial	6.5	6.1	5.8

From the ANOVA, the effect of the independent variable Job Level was significant (F = 9.32, df 1, 160, p < 0.01) as was the independent variable Family Commitment. No significant interaction was found between Job Level and Family Commitment (F = 4.43, df 2, 160, p < 0.01).

Post hoc planned comparisons of the three levels of the variable Family Commitment were performed using T - Scheffe, revealing a significant difference between the groups 'married with dependent children' and 'single without dependent children', at the level of P< 0.01.

Thus those subjects with high job levels were found to have more roles than those with low job levels. The number of roles held was also found to be significantly higher in those who were married with dependent children compared to those who were single and childless. As might be predicted from the multiple role hypothesis, women fulfil a number of different roles, and that number increases with job level and family commitment, but there is no interaction between these two factors. The demands imposed by these multiple roles were then examined.

4) TOTAL ROLE DEMAND

Subjects were requested to mark an appropriate point on a visual analogue scale between 0 and 100 to indicate how demanding they found each of their roles. 161 subjects responded, with total scores, from all scales, ranging from 0 to 633. The results were analysed using a two way, independent groups, ANOVA.

TABLE 5.7   MEAN TOTAL ROLE DEMAND BETWEEN GROUPS

	Family Commitment		
Job Level	Married, dependent children	Married, no children	Single, no children
Managerial/ Professional	317.4	274.5	257.5
Administrative/ Secretarial	243.1	187.8	198.0

From the ANOVA, the effects of the independent variable of Job Level was significant ($F = 11.99$, df 1, 160, $p < 0.01$). No significant effect was found at the level of Family Commitment and there was no significant interaction between Job Level and Family Commitment. Those with high job levels, therefore, reported a greater degree of total role demand than those with lower job levels. Although no differences were found between the levels of family commitment for this variable, there was a tendency towards significance at the level of $p = 0.08$.

Overall, the results show that the women with high job levels experienced both a significantly higher number of role conflicts and a significantly higher degree of total role conflict than those with lower job levels. If respondents in the former category are seen as career women, then the results are in contrast to much of the research which tends to show that role conflict is greater in

non-career women (Holahan and Gilbert 1979; Baruch, Biener & Barnett, 1987; Chambers, 1989). The results, though, are in accordance with those of Holmstrom (1972) who argued that the experience of role conflict was especially potent for women in professional careers.

However, while generally the professional and managerial group experienced greater role conflict than the secretarial and administrative group, within this lower level there was a subgroup who experienced a similar degree of conflict to that of the higher level group. Thus the group of workers in lower level jobs are not necessarily homogeneous.

Although Hypothesis 1 was partly supported by these results, the degree of role conflict was not affected by level of family commitment on either measure. However, the pattern of results was different when number of roles and total role demand were considered. Those with high job levels were found to occupy more roles and to have a greater degree of total role demand than those with low job levels, but the number of roles held was found to be significantly higher in those who were married with dependent children compared with those who were single and childless. Although no differences were found between the levels of family commitment for the variable 'total role demand', there was a tendency towards significance. Thus the numbers of roles held by the respondents, and to some extent their levels of total role demand, did increase as they progressed through the life stages of getting married and having children. This suggests that the actual number of roles performed may not be the crucial factor in

determining the degree of role conflict experienced since this measure was not found to increase progressively through these stages. It is possible, as suggested by Hoffman & Nye, (1974), that it is the quality of the roles adhered to, rather than the actual number, which is the most salient factor in determining the experience of role conflict.

ROLE CONFLICT AND HEALTH

HYPOTHESIS 2 relates to the negative impact of role conflict on health. According to the hypothesis, degree of role conflict would be expected to be positively correlated with the symptoms ('worn out' and 'up tight') reported.

1) TOTAL ROLE CONFLICT AND GENERAL WELL-BEING (WORN OUT)

A Pearsons correlation was used to analyse the relationship between the measures Total Role Conflict and General Well Being (Worn Out). The observed coefficient $r = 0.34$, $(n = 161)$ is positive and significant at the level of $p < 0.01$. This relationship accounts for 11% of the variance on these measures (adjusted coefficient). These data thus support the hypothesis; however the correlation is weak, and suggests that other factors are involved.

2) TOTAL ROLE CONFLICT AND GENERAL WELL-BEING (UP TIGHT)

The relationship between Total Role Conflict and General Well

Being (Up Tight) was also measured using Pearsons correlation techniques. The observed coefficient $r = 0.171$, $(n = 161)$ is positive and significant at the level of $p < 0.05$. The relationship accounts for 2.3% of the variance on these measures (adjusted coefficient). The hypothesis is therefore supported, but again the correlation is very weak.

Although the degree of total role conflict does correlate positively with both measures, thus supporting the hypothesis, the weakness of the correlations indicates that other factors are involved. The relationship is not a simple one, and again may be better described by a multiple role hypothesis. Role conflict may potentially have a negative impact on general well-being, but such effects may be offset by the positive gains resulting from the existence of supportive roles.

The measures of well-being were broken down by job level and family commitment as an indirect test of the simple dual role hypothesis. The prediction would be that, as the conflict increases so would the report of symptoms of ill health. The high job level, high family commitment group would be predicted to be the least well.

3) GENERAL WELL-BEING (UP TIGHT)

Subjects scores on the General Well-Being measure, Up Tight, were then looked at in relation to Family Commitment and Job Level. The results were analysed using a two way, independent groups, ANOVA.

TABLE 5.8 MEAN GENERAL WELL-BEING (UP TIGHT) BETWEEN GROUPS

Job Level	Family Commitment		
	Married, Dependent Children	Married, No Children	Single, No Children
Managerial/ Professional	7.8	10.4	8.7
Administrative/ Secretarial	10.9	11.9	9.5

From the ANOVA, no significant effect was found for the independent variable Job Level or for the variable Family Commitment. Neither was there any significant interaction between the two. No difference in General Well-Being (Up Tight) was therefore demonstrated according to job level or family commitment. However, the data did suggest that the high job level, high family commitment group was the healthiest and not the least healthy as predicted.

4) GENERAL WELL-BEING (WORN OUT).

Subjects scores on the 'Worn Out' measure of the GWBQ were also analysed in relation to these two variables, again using a two way, independent groups, ANOVA.

TABLE 5.9   MEAN GENERAL WELL-BEING (WORN OUT) BETWEEN GROUPS

Job Level	Family Commitment		
	Married, Dependent Children	Married, No Children	Single, No Children
Managerial/ Professional	19.3	21.1	19.3
Administrative/ Secretarial	16.1	22.4	18.9

The ANOVA shows no significant effect for the independent variable Job Level. The effect of the variable Family Commitment was significant ($F = 4.54$, df 2, 160, $p < 0.01$), but there was no significant interaction between Job Level and Family Commitment.

Post hoc planned comparisons of the three levels of the variable 'family commitment' were performed using T - Scheffe, revealing a significant difference between the groups married with dependent children and married without dependent children, at the level of $P < 0.01$. The results therefore indicate no difference on this measure of general well-being according to job level, but suggest that married women without dependent children experience more symptoms of being worn out than do women with dependent children. This is the reverse of what was predicted by the simple dual role hypothesis, but would support research

stressing the beneficial effects of family roles e.g. Barnett, Marshall & Singer, (1992).

The results are also congruent with Cox, Thirlaway & Cox (1984), who found a similar pattern with shop floor workers. It is suggested that this may be due to the social situation at work revolving around 'chatting' about families, thus excluding single and childless women from involvement in a valuable source of support. It could also be that family demands offset the potential strain from work demands, as suggested by Cooke and Rosseau (1984). This explanation is consistent with the alternative multiple role hypothesis.

HYPOTHESIS 3

The data discussed above rule out the possibility that total role conflict is related to the primary dual role conflicts. However, the relationship between roles and role conflict was further explored here.

1) NUMBER OF ROLES AND TOTAL ROLE CONFLICT

A Pearsons correlation was used to analyse the relationship between the measures 'Number of Roles' and 'Total Role Conflict'. The observed coefficient of $r = 0.331$. was significant at the level of $P < 0.01$. The adjusted coefficient, $(r^2) = 0.104$, shows that the relationship between the Number of Roles and the Total Role Conflict accounts for 10.4% of the variance on these measures.

The number of roles is, therefore, related to the total amount of role conflict experienced. Although the relationship is weak, the results can be seen to lend partial support to Hypothesis 3, and are consistent with the multiple role hypothesis.

2) TOTAL ROLE CONFLICT AND TOTAL ROLE DEMAND

A Pearsons correlation was used to analyse the relationship between the measures 'Total Role Conflict' and 'Total Role Demand'. The observed coefficient of $r = 0.47$ was significant at the level $p < 0.01$. The relationship between total role conflict and total role demand therefore accounts for 10.4% of the variance on these measures (adjusted coefficient).

There is, therefore, a weak, positive correlation between total role demand and total role conflict, showing, once again, partial support for Hypothesis 3.

The results largely rule out the possibility of dual roles being a major factor in the experience of role conflict, since role conflict was found not to differ between working mothers who perform dual roles and single women who do not. In line with the hypothesis, the results do suggest that the cumulative impact of women's roles may influence the experience of role conflict to a degree, although the relationship is not strong. A slight correlation was also found between a number of other factors. It therefore seems likely that there are many other factors, also contributing to the experience of role conflict.

5.3 SUMMARY

The results do not support an explanation of role conflict in terms of a simple dual role theory. Role conflict was not found to vary with the degree of family commitments of the working woman. Being a working mother produces no greater amount of role conflict than being a single working woman, despite the working mother having a greater number of roles. This fits in with research findings that women with more roles are healthier than those with fewer roles (Sorenson and Verbrugge 1987; Hibbard and Pope, 1991) However, the amount of role conflict experienced is slightly related to general well-being, but rather than those women with high family commitments having poorer well being, married working women with children were found to report fewer symptoms of being 'worn out' than married working women with no children. Thus high family commitments may even be a positive health factor for the working woman (Glick, 1989; Coombs, 1991).

Findings indicated that women with high job levels were found to experience more role conflict than women with low job levels, suggesting that it might be the level of the job rather than life stage which is the crucial factor in the experience of role conflict. These findings tie in with research by Holstrom (1972) and Beckman (1978), but conflict with more recent research suggesting that the advantages are greater for women in high status occupations (Baruch, Barnett and Rivers, 1983). However, while the professional and managerial group generally experienced greater role conflict than the secretarial and administrative group, within the lower job level group there was a subgroup who

experienced a similar degree of conflict to those with a higher job level. It may be that those who experience higher role conflict are those who regard their job as a career and would expect to progress to higher job levels. Perhaps those women who commit themselves to a home role reduce role conflict, while those who emphasize the work role may exacerbate it. A measure of the actual degree of commitment to work would be useful in any further studies.

The degree of role conflict did not appear to be strongly related to any particular factor, but did correlate with the total number of roles, total role demand and number of role conflicts experienced rather than being specifically related to dual role conflict. While role conflict might be a reality for many different groups of women, as mentioned above it does not necessarily increase with additional family commitments. Role conflict has, therefore, to be seen as a complex phenomenon, with roles being potential sources of support as well as of demands. In relation to the return to work, these results would again seem to confirm the finding that in looking ahead to post-break employment, women overestimate the degree of role conflict they will experience.

CHAPTER 6   DISCUSSION

6.0   INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Basically exploratory in nature, this thesis is about women as both mothers and workers. As argued in the Introduction, for the majority of women, the work role and the motherhood role are inextricably linked, and an individual functioning in one of these domains is inevitably affected by their involvement in the other. On the basis of a review of the literature, a model was therefore postulated that jointly incorporated both theses spheres within an overall life cycle perspective. This model was found to be extremely useful in that it clearly delineated the stages that women saw as relevant to their career/child-rearing histories.

The model is made up of three key stages - women working full-time before having children, women at home with children, and women returning after a break for children. The major focus of the research was the decision-making processes that women go through when moving between one stage and the next, and the model was therefore developed further to include three key decision points. The costs and benefits of the stages were seen in terms of the stresses and satisfactions experienced by the women, thus allowing the 'meaning' element to be incorporated into the model. Analysis of the data on stress and satisfaction, obtained through a content analysis of the women's subjective responses, thus enabled the decision points to be 'unpacked' and the decision-making processes to be explored in greater depth.

The preliminary research was carried out on a sample of married women at home with children - i.e. at stage 2 in the model - and

data from this formed the basis of the later decision-making models. The main survey extended the research into the other two stages, and also allowed for comparisons to be made between retrospective, actual and anticipated assessments of the different stages. Although results were discussed briefly in the relevant chapters, as the model is 'unpacked', a more general discussion of the findings, incorporating results from both these surveys together will be presented here. Results from the third survey were discussed in Chapter 5, but will also be considered here in a more general context.

6.1 UNPACKING THE MODEL

The model put forward in the Introduction identified three key decision points in women's career/child-rearing histories. The research explored these decisions in terms of the stresses and satisfactions experienced at different stages, and the factors thus elicited can therefore be seen as the costs and benefits that women weigh up in making their decisions.

1) Decision point 1 is relevant to working women who are thinking about having a first child, and have to choose between having children and leaving work (if/when pregnant), or remaining childless for the moment and staying in employment. As stated, the focus is primarily on having a family, and the decision to stay at work or leave follows on from that initial choice.

2) Having made the decision to have children and carried that decision through into practice, the next important point in the model is the decision to either take maternity leave, or to stay at home for a longer period with children.

3) For those women who choose the latter option, decision point 3 is concerned with either returning to work or continuing to stay at home with children.

6.2 DECISION POINT 1

Diagram 6.1 illustrates the first decision point in the model. It is suggested that this decision will be affected by women's perceptions of the stresses and satisfactions of the current stage, together with the anticipated stresses and satisfactions associated with motherhood. The model can then be further 'unpacked' (Diagram 6.2) by identifying these factors.

As reported earlier (Chapter 4), women identified various sources of stress and satisfaction in their current work situations, pre-break, as well as anticipating the stresses and satisfactions of the next stage. As can be seen from Diagram 6.2, many of the anticipated stresses of motherhood (lack of social interaction, loss of independence, low self image, lack of intellectual stimulation) mirror the positive elements that the women associate with their current jobs. It would therefore seem that women in the pre-break stage, when thinking about being at home with children, anticipate losing many of the things that currently give them satisfaction. However, in comparison with women actually in that stage, many of these anticipated stresses were overestimated. As argued in Chapter 4, when women look ahead, it appears that they overestimate the size of the problem.

Nevertheless, two of the anticipated stresses merit further discussion: self image and independence. It is perhaps not surprising that self image was associated with employment by many of the women in both the preliminary and the main surveys.

Diagram 6.1

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FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN AT DECISION POINT 1 IN THE MODEL

GROUP A PRE-BREAK
EMPLOYED
NO CHILDREN

HAVE CHILDREN
LEAVE WORK

?

STAY AT WORK
NO CHILDREN

?

DECISION
POINT 1

CURRENT STRESSES
OF WORK

CURRENT
SATISFACTIONS
OF WORK

ANTICIPATED
SATISFACTIONS
OF MOTHERHOOD

ANTICIPATED
STRESSES OF
MOTHERHOOD

FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN AT DECISION POINT I IN THE MODEL – 'UNPACKED'

Diagram 6.2

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GROUP A PRE-BREAK EMPLOYED NO CHILDREN

HAVE CHILDREN LEAVE WORK

STAY AT WORK NO CHILDREN

DECISION POINT I

?

?

CURRENT SOURCES OF SATISFACTION AT WORK

Job satisfaction
Social interaction
Resource utilization
Intellectual stimulation
Work environment
Financial benefits
Career prospects
Self image
Independence

MAIN SOURCES OF STRESS IN CURRENT WORK SITUATION

Pressure
Nature of job
Interpersonal relations
Time constraints
Inadequate resources
Work environment

ANTICIPATED SATISFACTIONS OF MOTHERHOOD

Fulfilment of motherhood role
Time issues

ANTICIPATED STRESSES OF MOTHERHOOD

Frustration of repetitive routine
Lack of social interaction
Loss of independence
Low self image
Time constraints
Lack of intellectual stimulation

Self image or self concept has often been related to occupation (Rosenberg, 1957; Royce & Powell, 1983; Osipow, 1983), and, indeed, Osipow goes as far as to suggest that occupational choice represents the implementation of the self concept. Dupont, Jobin & Capel (1989) undertook a longitudinal study of school leavers hoping to go on to higher education, and concluded that in general, their subjects (mainly male) tended to actualise self image through their occupational choice. Optimum career choices can be seen as those that fit an individual's abilities, interests and talents, but for many women, their intellectual capacities and talents are not reflected in their educational and occupational achievments (Betz, 1989; Fitzgerald & Crites, 1980; Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1973). Even if this is not the case for all women, occupational downgrading is a common occurence for many of those who return after a break for children (See Introduction).

It has been argued that the development of independence in the individual is associated with being able to see oneself as competent and capable in carrying out everyday goals and activities (Stewart, 1982). Zirkel (1992) suggests that independence is particularly significant during periods of transition or change. In this context, she argues, independence is about managing the goals and tasks of a changing environment while maintaining important aspects of the self. It could be argued that women are constantly having to cope with changing circumstances as they negotiate their way through different life stages. Independence might therefore be expected to be a salient concept for them, and this, in fact, appeared to be the case.

Working women identified it as a factor contributing to their satisfaction and women at home also associated it with the positive aspects of work, both pre- and post-break. However, it was not mentioned at all by the latter group when assessing their current situation. It could be that women at home with children have more difficulty in hanging onto those 'important aspects of the self' that Zirkel (1992) identifies as part of being independent. The lack of independence was also anticipated as a source of stress by Group A women looking towards the next stage. This could perhaps be because they feared the loss of financial independence or the necessity of being dependent on a partner.

In balancing the costs and benefits at this decision point, the satisfactions of pre-break employment also need to be considered. These include job satisfaction, social interaction, resource utilization, intellectual stimulation, the work environment, financial benefits, career prospects, self image and independence. A number of similar factors were identified by Dex (1988) in an analysis of the 1980 Women and Employment Survey. She found that young, childless women under 30 - in many ways analogous to the pre-break group - found satisfaction at work in: having friendly people to work with; good prospects; doing a job they liked doing and having the opportunity to use their abilities. These seem to fit quite closely to some of the categories used here.

Although the 'biological clock' is ticking away, for most women, this first decision of the model can be put off for some considerable time. As argued earlier (see Introduction, Section 1.4), some women are increasingly choosing to delay motherhood

until they reach their thirties. Within the context of the decison-making model, it could be argued that the more the satisfactions of work and anticipated stresses of motherhood outweigh the stresses of work and anticipated benefits of motherhood, the longer that decision might be postponed.

6.3 DECISION POINT 2

The decision to return to work after maternity leave or to take a longer period out of employment can also be considered within the framework of the model. The salient decision point here is decision point 2 (see Diagram 6.3), and the factors influencing that decision for women in Group A can be seen in terms of the anticipated positive and negative aspects associated with the different courses of action. The diagram identifies these factors and presents them as inputs into the decision-making process.

Diagram 6.3

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DECISION POINT 2 IN THE MODEL – MATERNITY LEAVE VERSUS STAYING AT HOME

STAY AT HOME
WITH CHILDREN

HAVE CHILDREN
LEAVE WORK

TAKE MATERNITY
LEAVE

?

?

REASONS FOR WANTING TO
TAKE LONGER BREAK
(ANTICIPATED)

DECISION

POINT 2

REASONS FOR WANTING TO
TAKE MATERNITY LEAVE
(ANTICIPATED)

+ FACTORS

FULFILMENT OF MOTHERHOOD
ROLE
DUTY

+ FACTORS

FINANCIAL BENEFITS
JOB SATISFACTION
INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION
SELF IMAGE
INDEPENDENCE
SOCIAL INTERACTION

— FACTORS

ANTICIPATED ROLE CONFLICT/
OVERLOAD IF AT WORK

— FACTORS

FRUSTRATION OF REPETITIVE
ROUTINE IF AT HOME
LOSE OUT RE: CAREER PROSPECTS

The idea of making a decision at this point has been more positively established than in previous research. Brannen and Moss (1991) studied a large sample of women during the early years of parenthood. While they found that women who intended to return to work were clear that they were making a decision, and indeed described their decision in terms of a choice, they suggest that the non-returners did not really make a decision at all. They simply took it for granted that they would resign their jobs and look after their children during their early years. Unlike the women in these surveys, questionnaires aimed at investigating the decision not to return were unproductive. Again, this can perhaps be related to the nature of the sample. Middle class women with qualifications and economic resources are in a better position to make choices.

The decision made by women in this survey can again be seen in terms of costs and benefits. When the anticipated satisfactions of work (financial benefits, job satisfaction, intellectual stimulation, self image, independence and social interaction) combined with the anticipated stresses of motherhood (frustration of repetitive routine and the loss of career prospects), outweigh the anticipated satisfactions of motherhood (fulfilment of motherhood role and duty) and the anticipated stresses of being a working mother (role conflict/overload), then women will take maternity leave. When the latter outweigh the former, then women will take a longer break. However, as mentioned above, some of the stresses of staying at home with children were overestimated by Group A women. Two, though, were not anticipated at all: children's demands and health issues. It might be that until a

woman actually has children, the demands they make on time, energy and consequently health, are greatly underestimated. Clearly, such 'distortions' could well influence women's decision-making processes.

Even if the stresses of this stage are sometimes overestimated, women are perhaps justified in worrying about the problems associated with being at home with children. Those women already at Stage 2 identified the lack of social interaction and intellectual stimulation, the frustration of a repetitive routine, time constraints, low status, low self image, children's demands and related health issues as sources of stress associated with their current situation. This fits in with much of the literature on the home role, where women's experiences as homemakers are often negatively reported. For example, Brannen & Moss (1991) undertook a longitudinal study of dual earner households during the early years of parenthood, and found that a large number of women at home identified social isolation as a problem. Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan & Mullen (1981), in a large scale longitudinal study, found that women who occupied the homemaker role were more likely to experience 'role disenchantment' and depression than were employed women. Parry (1987) reported a relationship between dissatisfaction with the homemaker role and depression , anxiety and self depreciation. Sholomskas & Axelrod (1986) studied 67 married women with pre-school children, divided into groups according to occupational status. They found that women's self esteem ratings differed significantly across the groups, with career women reporting the highest self esteem and homemakers the lowest. Indeed, being a housewife has been found to constitute

a distinct health disadvantage (Arber, 1991).

6.4 DECISION POINT 3

The decision to return to work can again be seen to involve a balancing of costs and benefits. However, at this point in the model the costs and benefits include the retrospective assessments of work at the pre-break stage, the current experiences of being at home with children and the anticipated stresses and satisfactions of post-break employment. Diagram 6.4 highlights this process and Diagram 6.5 once again 'unpacks' the model and gives it meaning by identifying the relevant factors.

In anticipating the return to work, women identified a wide range of both stresses and satisfactions. The main source of stress associated with this stage for all groups was role conflict/overload, although it was found to be important by more women anticipating this stage than by the working mothers themselves. Role conflict and role overload have been identified as common phenomena for the working mother in many studies (Yogev, 1983; Brannen & Moss, 1991; Burley, 1991), and have even been anticipated by young women while still at school (Griffin, 1985). According to Voydanoff (1980) women involved in simultaneous work-family role participation across work-family life cycle stages are usually subject to role overload and conflict.

FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN AT DECISION POINT 3 IN THE MODEL

RETURN TO WORK AFTER BREAK

GROUP B BREAK AT HOME WITH CHILDREN

CONTINUE TO STAY AT HOME WITH CHILDREN

?

?

DECISION POINT 3

RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF SATISFACTIONS AT EMPLOYMENT PRE-BREAK

RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF STRESSES AT EMPLOYMENT PRE-BREAK

CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF STRESSES AT HOME

CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF SATISFACTIONS AT HOME

ANTICIPATED SATISFACTIONS OF FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

ANTICIPATED STRESSES OF FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

Diagram 6.4

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Diagram 6.5

'UNPACKED' BOXES FROM DECISION POINT 3 OF THE MODEL

RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF PRE-BREAK SATISFACTIONS

- Job satisfaction
- Social Interaction
- Resource utilization
- Self Image
- Independence
- Intellectual stimulation
- Work environment
- Financial benefits

DECISION POINT 3

RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF PRE-BREAK STRESSES

- Pressure
- Nature of job
- Interpersonal relations
- Time constraints
- Role conflict/overload
- Inadequate resources
- Work environment

CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF STRESSES AT HOME

- Children's demands
- Frustration of repetitive routine
- Lack of social interaction
- Financial disadvantages
- Time constraints
- Lack of intellectual stimulation
- Health issues

CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF SATISFACTIONS AT HOME

- Fulfilment of motherhood role
- Time issues
- Social interaction

ANTICIPATED SATISFACTIONS OF FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

- Financial benefits
- Self Image
- Intellectual stimulation
- Social Interaction
- Independence
- Interest outside the home
- Family benefits
- Confidence
- Job satisfaction
- Resource utilization
- Career prospects

ANTICIPATED STRESSES OF FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

- Childcare facilities
- Role conflict/overload
- Changing technology
- Finding suitable employment
- Lack of confidence
- Time constraints
- Readjustment to routine
- Low status

Emmons et al., (1990) found that 75% of women in their sample experienced conflict between work and home roles, although they suggesed that this was more likely to do with overload than with any intrinsic incompatibility between the two roles. Anecdotal evidence for the distress of women juggling multiple roles is extensive (McBride, 1991), although it has been argued that this might relate more to the quality of the roles, than to multiple role occupancy per se (Froberg, Gjerdingen & Preston, 1986; Akabas, 1988). According to Barnett & Baruch (1985), the latter does not necessarily have a negative impact on well-being. Indeed, they suggest the opposite, arguing that a positive effect does not require the absence of stress, but rather a net gain in terms of rewards or gratifications. This fits in with the results showing that women experience both stresses and satisfactions, and overall, were more satisfied than stressed (see Discussion, section 6.6).

Together with role conflict/overload, childcare facilities were anticipated as a major source of stress for women looking ahead to the return to work. However, while it was anticipated by 53% of women in Stage 2, it was identified as a source of stress by only 25% of working mothers. Given the lack of adequate childcare facilities (See Introduction) and the fact that in the great majority of cases primary responsibility for children lies with the mother (Woods, 1987; Brannen & Moss, 1991), it is not surprising that women both anticipate and experience problems in this area. A study of low income women by Belle (1982) found that those women who had child care problems had the highest levels of depression in the study. Current practice and legislation penalises

many women who find that the cost of childcare and the loss of benefits would leave them worse off than if they remained unemployed. For those who do work, the costs of childcare cannot be set against tax. The availability and cost of childcare facilities then, are clearly a source of stress to many women returning to work after a break for children, and particularly for those women experiencing financial difficulties. The issue has been identified by many as a problem (e.g. Richardson, 1993), and even raised in parliament. Labour M.P., Diane Abbott, interviewed on Radio 4's 'Today' programme on 29th. June, 1993, stated that, except for Portugal, Britain had the worst childcare facilities in Europe, and she condemned the government for failing to redress the situation.

Age was anticipated as a problem associated with the return to work by only a small percentage of women (6% in Group A and 1% in Group B). However, it has been argued that the effects of age discrimination are possibly the most serious problem for qualified women returners (Jackson, 1991). Stubbs and Wheelock (1990), for example, in a study of 58 women in the 25 -45 age group, found that age was consistently identified as a problem by women considering the return to employment. Age militates far more against women than it does men - women take longer to become qualified and need to take time out to rear children (MccGwire, 1992). This might therefore be an example of gross under-estimation of what is a very real problem. One explanation could be that the sample here have not contemplated joining or returning to a profession where age is a relevant factor. Clearly, there are many around, but maybe a high proportion of young women screen themselves out before they even start on a career,

knowing the problems they may have to face if they also want a family. As Osborne (1991) argues, the fact that many young women are considered to be potential carers of their own families, limits their educational choices and career options at an early stage in their life course.

On the plus side, the main benefits of employment, post-career break included social interaction, job satisfaction, financial benefits, independence, intellectual stimulation, self image, resource utilization and family benefits. In relation to self image, it is interesting that it is again Group B women who most frequently identified this factor as a source of satisfaction when looking ahead to post-break employment, in the same way as they had when making a retrospective assessment of employment at the pre-break stage. This highlights the lack of self image identified as a stress factor by Group B women at home with children. Similarly, the flipside of financial benefits is the financial disadvantages associated with being at home with children. Indeed, in Brannen and Moss's survey (1991), 73% of women in low status jobs and 44% of women in high status jobs mentioned financial pressures as the main reason for returning to work.

As discussed above, women's perceptions of future stages tend to be somewhat distorted, leading them to anticipate unnecessarily high levels of stress, and according to Coverman (1989), perceived role conflict is detrimental to women's psychological health. This is particularly pertinent to this decision point, for it might be that in weighing up the various stresses and satisfactions, women place undue emphasis on the anticipated stresses of future

employment, and thus delay re-entry into the job market. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 6.8.

It has to be remembered that these factors are not simply theoretical constructs - they derive directly from the women's experiences and can be seen to have practical implications in the real world. In her study, MccGwire (1992) found that the better the benefits offered by an employing body, the more likely women were to return to work after having children. It could be argued that it is precisely the lack of the sort of benefits MccGwire is talking about, in particular childcare facilities, that are anticipated as stresses by prospective women returners. The introduction of more such benefits by employers might therefore tip the balance in favour of returning to work for women at this particular stage in their lives as both mothers and workers.

6.5 LEVELS OF STRESS AND SATISFACTION AT THE THREE DIFFERENT STAGES

It was hypothesised in the introduction that the stage a woman was at in her career/child-rearing history would affect the stresses and satisfactions she experienced. In the main survey, overall levels of stress and satisfaction were measured at all three stages of the model - in retrospect and anticipation as well as currently - for all three groups. The hypothesis was supported for stress, but not for satisfaction.

A clear comparison of the stress levels of each group in their current situation indicates that women at home experience less stress than women at work, both before and after the career break (39.6 for the women at home, compared to 54.9 for the pre-break group and 48.5 for those in the post-break stage, $F(2,432) = 10.67$, p, 0.0001). If stress is seen as an indicator of poor mental health, then these results appear to contradict much of the literature in this area. Research has consistently reported the beneficial effects of continued employment and multiple role occupancy (Betz, 1989; McKinlay, Triant, McKinlay, Brambilla & Ferdock, 1990), while much of the evidence suggests that mothers at home, with fewer roles, tend to be less healthy (Nathanson, 1980; Thoits, 1986) than their working counterparts. One explanation for these findings might relate to the sample. The women were, on average, fairly well educated, and likely to have husbands or partners with reasonable incomes. They were more likely, therefore, to have access to many of the resources that allow women to turn the homemaker role into a satisfying and even creative experience.

Given their qualifications, they would also have a reasonable chance of getting back into the labour market, and would be less worried than their working class counterparts about the financial implications of their failing to do so. Many of them would not be under the constant stress faced by working class women or single mothers experiencing financial hardship. On the other hand, the employed mothers may well have been feeling guilty about not having enough time to devote to their roles as homemakers, wives and mothers (Stokes & Peyton,1986). There is, after all, a lot of pressure on today's professional woman to be a superwoman (Richardson, 1993) - a high achiever at work, a wonderful wife and a perfect mother.

It must also be remembered that overall stress levels were relatively low - scores out of 100 were 54% for the pre-break group, 39.6% for the women at home and 48.5% for those who had returned to work after a break. It is also important to point out that in this survey stress and satisfaction were not mutually exclusive, and compared to the stress levels, satisfaction levels were considerably higher - 67.6, 73.6 and 73.9 respectively.

Much of the qualitative data does seem to suggest that it is not the work role *per se* that women find stressful, but the lack of practical help and support in carrying out a number of different roles simultaneously. Even for those women without children, there was a sense of resigned irritability with spouses who failed to take equal responsibility for tasks in the home, perhaps setting the scene for problems in the future. One woman went so far as to refer to her husband as a dependent, having identified him in the

section which asked respondents to name any other dependents in the household!

Practical help and support could also include the availability of childcare facilities, and, as suggested in the Introduction, these are both costly and rare - even at the top end of the market. MccGwire (1992) identified the fifty 'Best Companies for Women' - those that could be said to be good employers in terms of a number of identified factors. These were: equal opportunities policy, equal opportunities recruitment, monitoring, positive action, creche facilities, career breaks, job shares and flexible hours. Each company was given either a tick or a cross on each of the above factors, and a quick analysis of her results shows that creche facilities came out by far the worst. Given that these are companies that are doing a lot for women, it is a sad fact that less than half provide childcare facilities for the use of their employees. However, workplace nurseries benefit employers as well as their employees. A study undertaken by the Analysis Unit of Sheffield City Polytechnic for Bradford Metropolitan Council in 1989 looked at the effects that nursery provision had in helping to retain and attract staff. The survey estimated that if the Bradford Council workplace nursery were to close, 42% of parents would be likely to give up work - at a cost to the council of £140,000 (cited in MccGwire, 1992).

The lack of childcare facilities comes up again and again as a real problem for working women. McRae (1991) studied a random sample of nearly 8000 women in the Newcastle area who had babies in December 1987 and January 1988. She found that 12% of

women not in work were not working because they were unable to find childcare, and 11% could not find childcare they could afford. Over half the sample (54%) wanted to see an extension to the childcare facilities currently available. Women in this study commented frequently on the problems that the lack of childcare facilities posed for them as working mothers, and as one woman put it:

> "If you want to maintain a professional
> position after you have children, you
> need either a nanny or a wife!"

No significant difference in satisfaction levels was found between groups reporting their current experiences, although, as indicated above, working mothers and women at home with children appeared slightly more satisfied than did women in the pre-break stage. This could be seen as supporting research which suggests that caring relationships have a positive effect on women's health and happiness (Woods, 1987). It would also tie in with research findings (see above) that suggest that women benefit from multiple role occupancy. An interesting finding is that women can be both stressed and satisfied, and that some groups of women can be both more stressed and more satisfied than others. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 6.6.

One of the aims of the research (as outlined in the Introduction) was to compare the women's assessments of past and future stages with those made by the matched groups of women currently experiencing those stages., as this would have implications for the decision-making processes. Comparisons were therefore made

between current experiences of stress and satisfaction and the anticipated and retrospective assessments made at each reporting stage. In relation to stress, looking at the data in this way showed a clear pattern. The means for anticipated stress were considerably higher than the comparable means for stress actually reported in that stage. Women's perceptions of future stages were therefore somewhat distorted, leading them to anticipate unnecessarily high levels of stress. It could therefore be argued that anticipation tends to an overestimation of the size of the problem – a finding in line with much of the qualitative data discussed above. These results have clear implications for the training of women returners – if women's anticipations lead them to view the post-break stage in an unduly negative light, they may postpone re-entry into the labour market (see Discussion, section 6.7).

The means for retrospective assessments, on the other hand, were slightly lower than the comparable means in the actual stage. Thus in the appraisal of past events, the women tended to underestimate their impact. Such assesssments of past events, based on memory, are inevitably open to a whole range of distortions and reinterpretations (Moss & Goldstein, 1979; Baddeley, 1979). Landman and Manis (1992), for example, suggest that in assessing past actions, current beliefs, rather than those operating at the time, are most pertinent, particularly if an alternative course of action is now seen as more salient. However, the direction of the findings – i.e. the underestimation of stresses – is in line with previous research. Yarrow, Campbell and Barton (1970) identified certain systematic trends in discrepancies

between retrospective recall and objective information. They found that when people look back, they tend to underestimate problems and stresses. For example, mothers in their survey rated child development as less difficult than had actually been recorded during the school years.

6.6 MODELS OF STRESS AND SATISFACTION AND THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

The qualitative data would seem to suggest that women experience both stress and satisfaction at all stages in their career/child-rearing lives. Indeed, answers to Section E of the main questionnaire, which asked women to indicate their current position on a line between stress and satisfaction, proved impossible to score. Many of the respondents reported that they were both stressed **and** satisfied, and could not therefore answer the question. Hypothesis 5 (Chapter 4, p. 153) was therefore not supported. Original assumptions about the nature of these factors therefore needs to be revised.

The research findings tie in with a study by Tiedje, Wortman, Downey, Emmons, Biernat & Lang (1990) which looked at how women combined perceptions of role conflict and role enhancement. They found that the two were not mutually exclusive. While some women derived both conflict and enhancement from their roles, others derived relatively little of either, and yet others found only one or the other in their roles. They concluded that conflict and enhancement could not be placed at opposite ends of a continuum. Although they were not looking specifically at stress and satisfaction, a useful analogy can be made. Stress and satisfaction can be seen as independent, orthogonal constructs and the relationship between the two has been outlined in the simplified model below (based on Tiedje et.al., 1990).

FIGURE 6.6 STRESS/SATISFACTION MODEL 1

SATISFACTION

	LOW	HIGH
HIGH	Low Satisfaction High Stress	High Satisfaction High Stress
LOW	Low Satisfaction Low Stress	High Satisfaction Low Stress

STRESS (label at left, spanning HIGH and LOW rows)

The thesis so far has attempted to explore the decision-making processes by looking at the stresses and satisfactions that women experience at different stages in their career/child rearing histories. It is postulated that decisions will be made based on a weighing up of the retrospective (where appropriate), current and anticipated stresses and satisfactions. However, given the above model of stress and satisfaction, it it is now suggested that the decision-making processes will be easier when certain conditions prevail. This can be seen in Figure 6.7 below. It is argued that judgements will be arrived at more easily when based on the two shaded quadrants in the model - low satisfaction plus high stress and high satisfaction plus low stress. So, for example, at Decision Point 3, if the current stresses of home were high and the satisfactions low (quadrant 1), and the retrospective and anticipated assessments of stresses at work low and the satisfactions were high (quadrant 4), then a woman would be more

likely to decide in favour of returning.

FIGURE 6.7   STRESS/SATISFACTION MODEL 2

SATISFACTION
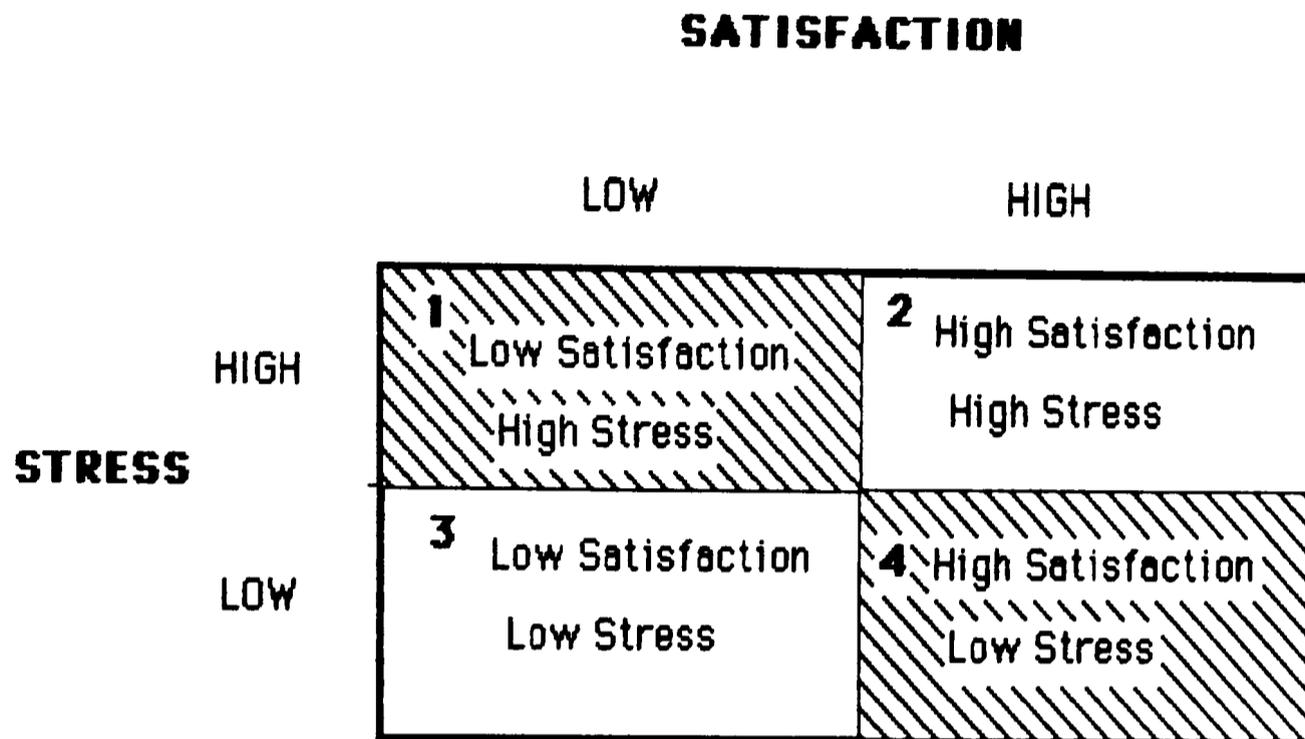
Squares 2 and 3 would seem to be more problematic. However, qualitative data obtained from some of the women in response to open questions suggest that in the work environment, at least, quadrant 2 might be quite positive. For instance, one woman described her feelings about being both highly stressed and highly satisfied in the following way:

> "Although I find my job very stressful at times,
>
> I also derive a great deal of satisfaction from
>
> it - basically I see it as a challenge and while
>
> I might complain about it, I think I actually
>
> need that challenge and, in fact, thrive on it".

Stress and satisfaction are therefore not only **not** mutually

exclusive, but high levels of both can co-exist and, it would appear, be seen in a positive light. However, this latter finding might be more a matter of semantics. Exactly what is meant by stress in the above context would need to be defined more clearly. It is also apparent that this woman is talking only about her experiences in the work environment. In response to a question asking her directly about the current stresses of employment, like most other respondents, she answered in a wider context and included such things as childcare facilities and role conflict/overload. This again supports the original hypothesis that the work role and the motherhood role cannot be easily separated.

6.7 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE RESEARCH

1) STRENGTHS

The strength of the research can be gauged by looking at the proposed models and considering their capacity for elucidating the ways in which women think about returning to work. The 3-stage life-cycle model looks at the decision points between the three stages, and describes a formalised and rational approach to women's working lives. It is obvious from the evidence that exists that many women depart, to some extent, from this model. While this is recognized, the research tries to explore the utility of the rational model to find out what happens in reality.

The model (Introduction, p. 22) does provide a useful working model, in that it manages to incorporate the roles of women both as mothers and workers. Findings from the studies demonstrate clearly that these roles were, on many occasions, inescapably intertwined. In particular, decision-making concerning the transitions between roles must be considered, taking both roles fully into account.

The cost/benefit model of decision-making allows the meaning and subsequent actions to emerge through the identification of the factors that are relevant to women, and thus captures very clearly what is going on for women when they think about these issues. The expanded models of the three key decision points (Sections 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4) elaborate the specific factors that are associated with each of these points. The model has practical applications,

particularly in relation to the training of women returners (see Section 6.8).

Exploration of the relationship between the stress and satisfaction dimensions of the decision-making processes, based on analysis of the data, indicates that women do not see these constructs as mutually exclusive. They can, in fact, be viewed as independent orthogonal constructs. In terms of decision-making, a stress/satisfaction model (Diagram 6.7) is postulated suggesting that decision-making will be easier when certain criteria are met. This is an interesting area which needs further exploration, and a number of ideas are discussed in Section 6. 9.

2) WEAKNESSES

Knowledge of the weaknesses of the research studies allows the findings to be placed in a proper context, and the likely limits to generalization to be established. All the studies were based on questionnaire surveys, and cross-sectional designs were used which only allowed the comparison of different groups at different stages in the research model. The inherent weakness of such an approach is the tendency to confound group and stage. The approach was adopted because others - possibly more adequate approaches based on longitudinal designs - were not possible within the limitations of the overall project. An attempt to gauge the degree of equivalence between groups, and their reports of the different stages, was made during the main survey when each group was asked to report on every stage. The differences between the three groups in relation to any one stage were thus assessed. The data

did reveal differences between groups, but these differences were consistent and meaningful. For example, in comparison to actual experiences, the problems of returning to work (Stage 3) were overestimated by the two groups who had not yet reached that stage, while the benefits of previous stages were underestimated in the retrospective assessments.

There was clearly a problem in sampling women in the various stages in a way which established homogeneous groups. This needs thinking about further, for it is uncertain whether the groups were as equivalent as would have been liked. It is acknowledged that the studies were carried out on a predominantly white middle class population. However it might be reasonably suggested that if some of the issues identified (e.g. childcare facilities) were problems for these women, then they would probably be even more problematic for their working class counterparts. Furthermore, it might be generally argued that working-class women, lacking financial resources, would be more isolated when at home with children, although this would clearly be dependent on the levels of support available to them from their families and community. These studies, then, can be seen as a starting point for further research, which could extend the work to different socio-economic and/or ethnic groups.

It is also important to question how far the present samples could be said to be typical of even middle-class women who work (or have worked), given that all women are increasingly experiencing the 'interrupted work histories' described earlier. Women in Group C of the main survey - women who had returned to work after a

break for children – included those working both part-time and full-time. It could be assumed that many women in the sample would subsequently have other children and other breaks. While the three-stage model adopted here does not therefore directly address the issue of women moving in and out of the labour market, it does anticipate this pattern.

In the main survey, the women in the different groups were matched, as far as possible, at the level of the group. Groups were matched in terms of socio-economic status, number of children and educational background. This strategy, given the sampling technique, could not be completely successful.

The studies were largely exploratory in nature, and therefore tended to ask women open-ended questions and rely on content analysis and descriptive statistics. This needs to be seen as a first step in the research, but one which has created a valuable pool of data. Further work might involve working toward tighter, closed questions, more rigorous hypothesis testing and detailed analytical statistics. Alternatively, follow-up research might focus on more qualitative data and analysis thus allowing for the underlying meaning to be further 'unpacked'.

The research relied heavily on eliciting data through self report techniques, and while it tried to establish reliability (within the context of the previous criticism) through the method of triangulation, such reliance on self report data might be seen as problematic. The next stage could therefore be to incorporate other forms of data and information collection. However, given

that the focus is on the decision-making processes, the problem is how else one could access and verify those processes. What is the best way to discover what women are thinking about? Despite the fact that the data were by self-report, one criticism is that decision-making processes were only **inferred** from those data. A way forward might be to ask women more directly about such issues as choice and decision-making.

In relation to specific aspects of the surveys, a number of improvements could be made. Given that stresses can be intermittent, it would have been a good idea to have asked the women whether they had recently experienced, or were currently experiencing, a crisis. While this was touched upon in the Stress Survey (Chapter 3), it could have been included as a specific question in the other surveys. Both in the Main Survey and the Role Conflict Survey it would have been useful to have asked for more information on the actual jobs the women were doing and to have enquired whether or not they took work home. This could clearly have impacted on their stress levels.

In all the surveys the role of children could have been explored overtly rather than information emerging in response to other questions to their mothers. For instance, children's attitudes towards their mothers' potential or actual return to work could have been elicited either directly or through asking the women themselves in what way they thought their children would be affected. Following on from this, the mothers could then be questioned on how their children's responses might in turn affect them.

Somewhat in the same vein, there could have been a greater focus on the attitudes of partners to the women's return to work. This could have been achieved by asking them directly or by asking the women themselves to anticipate their partner's responses. The latter was touched upon briefly in the Preliminary Survey, although the question was collapsed to include family as well as partner. Nevertheless, many respondents did distinguish between the two in their answers - e.g. " My mother would not approve, but my husband would be supportive".

As regards the Role Conflict Survey, there were several areas which could have been improved upon and expanded. For instance, the questions asking 'how demanding do you find this role?' could have been further 'unpacked' to allow the meaning to emerge more clearly. Concepts such as 'stressful', 'demanding' and 'challenging' can be rather confusing and certainly the first two were at times used almost interchangeably. They should all have been defined and looked at separately. With the focus specifically on the relationships between career demands, family commitments, role conflict and general well-being, other data that was asked for - e.g. other roles fulfilled - was not analysed. This could have produced interesting results and is an area that might usefully be followed up. Perhaps in this survey, the balance between quantitative and qualitative data was lost, with too little emphasis placed on the latter.

6.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TRAINING OF WOMEN RETURNERS

Of the three key decision points, the main focus in this thesis has been on Decision Point 3 - the return to work. The women's responses to questions asking them directly about these issues are therefore clearly relevant to the training of women returners, but other results, which can be related to their decision-making in this area are equally important.

Group B women, currently at home with children, were asked if there was any specific help, information or training that might be useful to them before returning to employment. 46% of those responding (50 out of the 91 women in the group) felt the need for a refresher course or retraining in their particular area; 41% anticipated needing new skills or qualifications; 28% felt that they would benefit from career advice, and 11% wanted assertiveness training.

In looking at the problems they anticipated in returning to similar employment, over a third (39%) put forward changing technology. This is not really surprising. The changes in office technology since the mid 1970's have radically altered the nature of information collection, processing, storage and retrieval. Given that 40% of all employed women in the UK are office workers (Cassell, 1991), this has serious implications for many working women, particularly if they have been away from the work environment for any length of time. It is hardly surprising, then, that women in the study were concerned about changing technology, and felt the need for training in this area.

Unfortunately, older employees and part-time employees are less likeley than their younger counterparts working full-time, to receive job-related training, and yet many women returners probably fall into these categories (Results of the Spring 1991 Labour Force Survey, Employment Gazette, August, 1992).

There is clearly a need for technical training, and for the facilities and resources for women to update their current skills as well as learning new ones. However, there is also a need for part-time training and retraining opportunities (Jackson, 1991), which would help more women re-enter the labour market further up the ladder.

Confidence building is also important, and it seems likely that the longer women are out of the labour market, the greater will be the necessity for training in this area. According to Roscher (1978) the rebuilding of self-confidence is the most important feature of retraining women returners, whatever their qualifications.

However, it seems as though there might also be a need for 'expectations' training. For the woman looking ahead to life as a working mother, things looked pretty grim. On the basis of the data, women's expectations and perceptions of future stages lead them to anticipate unnecessarily high levels of stress. This clearly has implications for training, for if women believe that the problems are going to be worse than they actually are, then they might put off returning. Results also indicated that the longer women were away, as measured by the age of their eldest child (See Chapter 4, Section 4.7), the more likely they were to

overestimate the problems of returning to work. Any training for women returners, therefore, needs to take into consideration the women's expectations, and look at how they compare with the reality of the situation. Clearly, there are a lot of problems, and it would not be helpful to pretend otherwise, but unnecessary anticipatory anxiety might well lower women's confidence even more, and perhaps accounts in part for the finding (see above) that women returners invariably need confidence building.

From the employer's point of view, the skills shortage and the decrease in school leavers mean that it is becoming increasingly important to rethink their recruitment policies for all women - not just for women returners. In order to keep a skilled woman, so that her training benefits the employing body throughout her career, the employer will have to deal with the likelihood that she will have children. It would therefore make more sense if their policies took this into account when a woman first took up employment, at whatever stage she was in her career/child-rearing history. However, this is clearly not happening on a major scale. Recent research into the gender differences in attitudes towards equal opportunities in both the home and work situations (Newell, 1993) found that men were less aware of the difficulties which women faced in combining career and family commitments, and did not appreciate the benefits that changed organisational arrangements could provide. Given that the majority of employers are men, the prospects do not look good.

6.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is clear that the three categories used in the surveys (pre-break, break and post-break) were rather simplistic. As Stubbs & Wheelock (1990) point out, once women leave the labour market to have children, there often follows a very complex pattern of labour force participation. Further research into women's decision-making processes might take this into consideration by breaking down the categories. For instance, post-break employment could be divided into full-time and part-time work; employed mothers might usefully be divided up according to the number of children they have, or the number of years away from permanent full-time work.

Results suggest that some of the findings here relate to the class situation of the sample. Certainly in terms of the decision-making processes, the ability to make choices can be seen as very clearly dependent on a woman's resources. Given that these women, who were on the whole a fairly privileged group, identified such a wide range of problems, it would not be surprising if a less privileged sample experienced even more problems. It would therefore be interesting to undertake similar research with a more working class population. Given that the class structure of the sample was probably a reflection of the stages identified in the model, the sort of categories identified above might help to redress that balance.

Problems for the working mother have sometimes been looked at in

terms of the external and internal barriers that can block women's achievments (Farmer, 1976; Betz, 1989; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Betz identifies multiple role overload as a major external barrier to women, which, she suggests, results from society's expectations that pursuit of a career should not lesson responsibility for the traditional tasks of homemaker and childrearer. Internal barriers to career success and satisfaction are thought to include: self-doubt – often caused by taking discrimination personally instead of recognising it as discrimination; fear of the attitudes of others towards her as a 'career woman', and guilt stemming from the feeling that she is neglecting her family in order to pursue a career. This study's category of role conflict/overload can be seen to include both internal and external aspects within the one factor. Further research in which the data was broken down into internal and external factors might lead to a better understanding of the sources of stress that women experience.

At Decision Point 3 in the model, women can effectively be seen as making six independent judgements, and then using that data to decide whether to go back to work or to stay at home. Unfortunately, we do not yet know in what way these six combine. Further research could involve redesigning the questionnaire instrument so as to quantify these six judgements and look at them in relation to the actual decisions that women had made about returning to work or staying at home. Regression analysis could then be undertaken to test out the hypothesis statistically.

It was suggested that the decision-making process would be more difficult if the balance between stress and satisfaction was inconsistent. It could be that stress and satisfaction, whilst independent factors, are not necessarily equal. The stress/satisfaction model 2 (Diagram 6.7) suggested that decisions might be more easily made when high stress was combined with low satisfaction on the one hand, and high satisfaction with low stress on the other. However, in order to test this out, it would be necessary to quantify these factors in some way. Alternatively, it might be that under inconsistent conditions, other factors come in to the equation. Further research in this area might attempt to identify such factors and look at their relative value and how they combine.

Given the proposition (Section 6.8) that women might benefit from both confidence and 'expectations' training, it might be useful to channel resources into their development. Standard assertiveness techniques would be appropriate in the former, but the latter is a new concept. Further research might then focus on women returners who have received one, both or neither of these modes of training.

6.10 CONCLUSION

This thesis presents a number of studies that looked at the decision-making processes of primarily middle class women in relation to a staged life cycle model, jointly incorporating women's work and motherhood roles. Basically exploratory in nature, it identified the factors that were important to women in the different stages of their career/child-rearing histories, and, through a cost/benefit model of decision-making, considered the balance of stresses and satisfactions that were relevant to women when they were thinking about moving from one stage to the next.

Results allowed the initial decision-making model to be 'unpacked', and the relevant factors identified. These were then looked at in relation to the relevant literature. Five factors were found to be particularly important to the women when looking at the decision to return to work, and these were successfully checked for reliabiliy in a separate study. A further factor, role conflict, was anticipated as a major stressor associated with post-break employment, and was explored in more detail in the survey in Chapter 5, where roles were found to be potential sources of support as well as of demands. Results also allowed the formulation of a stress/satisfaction model, which, when looked at in the context of the decision-making processes, suggested that decision-making would be easier if certain criteria were met.

The decision-making model was used to explore the implications for women's training, with a specific focus on the training of

women returners. Results indicated that the longer women were away from work, the more likely they were to overestimate problems at the post-break stage, and as a possible consequence, delay their return to the labour market. Any training for women returners, therefore, needs to take into consideration the women's expectations, and look at how accurate they are in reality. In more general terms, findings suggest that women are not very well catered for in the work environment, with the lack of adequate and reasonably priced childcare facilities, in particular, causing problems. It would clearly be to the benefit of employers to introduce better policies for women in order to keep skilled women in the labour force as well as attracting back those who have left to have children.

The strengths and weaknesses of the research were discussed, and a number of ideas put forward suggesting ways in which the work could have been improved upon and expanded. Recommendations were made for further research.

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APPENDIX

1) INFORMATION ON THE GENERAL WELL-BEING QUESTIONNAIRE

2) QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE PRELIMINARY SURVEY

3) QUESTIONNAIRES USED IN THE FACTOR VALIDATION STUDY

4) QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE MAIN SURVEY

5) QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE ROLE CONFLICT SURVEY

1) INFORMATION ON THE GENERAL WELL-BEING QUESTIONNAIRE

ESTABLISHED SCALES

THE GENERAL WELL-BEING QUESTIONNAIRE

The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined health in terms of social, psychological and physical well-being, and stressed its changeable and dynamic state. Rogers (1960) saw it as a function of both the individual's heredity and the accumulated and current effects of the person's environment as 'they act upon their psyche and body'. He therefore suggested that health might be seen as a continuum, with 'complete well-being' at one extreme and 'death' at the other. The 'grey' area in the middle, which he termed suboptimum health, is the one in which, for most people, day to day variations in their state of health occur. Instruments for measuring suboptimum health proved useful in that changes in suboptimum health appear to reflect environmental effects on the individual, and their subsequent experience of stress.

The General Well-being Questionnaire developed by the Stress Research group at Nottingham (Cox et al 1984) is one such instrument that has been used to tap into suboptimum health. It is a compilation of 24 general, non specific symptoms of ill health, each associated with a five point frequency scale (never through always). Respondents are asked to decide how often the symptoms have bothered or distressed them in the last six months. Two clusters of symptoms or factors have been identified, colloquially termed 'worn out' (GWF1) and 'up tight' (GWF2). The first factor (GWF1) is defined by symptoms relating to tiredness, emotional lability and cognitive confusion, while symptoms relating to worry and fear, tension and physical

signs of anxiety, define the second (GWF2). A copy of the General Well-being questionnaire was included as the final section of the preliminary questionnaire and the role conflict questionnaire.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE GWBQ

The general well-being questionnaire was developed by Cox et al (1983) as a measure of self- reported well-being in non clinical British populations. It focuses on the area between obvious illness or disease, on the one hand, and extreme good health on the other. A pool of 44 non-redundant items were derived from a range of existing questionnaires, and this checklist was then administered to over 1500 respondents. The data was then factor analysed, with an initial sample of 450 being used for the main study (Cox et. al. 1983). Two factors were derived as a result of this: GWF1 and GWF2. The first, colloquially termed 'worn-out', refers to symptoms of tiredness, emotional fragility and cognitive confusion. The second, 'uptight', is defined by the experience of physical symptoms, anxiety and tension.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The questionnaire has been shown to have a high level of reliability. Factor loadings and reliability coefficients for the items and scales were looked at, and where significant crossloading was indicated, items were rejected. Internal consistency was checked using Cronbach's Alpha, and item-total correlations of less than 0.3 were also rejected. The 28 remaining items in the scale were made up of 13 items in Factor 1 and 15 in Factor 2. Reliability and internal consistency were confirmed by Guttman's split half and the Spearman-Brown coefficients (Factor 1, 0.85; Factor 2, 0.88).

2) QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE PRELIMINARY SURVEY

RETURNING TO WORK QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is concerned with finding out about the attitudes of women who are, at present, looking after young children. What is of particular interest is how women in this situation view the prospect of returning to some form of paid employment outside the home.

If you are prepared to be contacted again, please complete the section below, and return this sheet with the questionnaire. It will be stored separately from the rest of the information, so that it wil not be possible to identify individuals from the data alone.

All information that you provide is for research purposes only, and will be treated in the strictest confidence. Please indicate if you have any objection to this data being stored and analysed on computer.

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR HELP

NAME	

ADDRESS

If you have any queries, please contact Ginny Lawes on Nottm. 506101 ext. 3725, or at the address below:-

Stress Research Group
Psychology Department
Nottingham University
University Park
Nottingham

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Will you please provide the following information:-

SECTION A

Age (years):....................

	Single	Married, Stable relationship	Divorced, Widowed,
Marital status (please tick as appropriate)			

Number of dependent children:..................

Age of children: (1).......

                       (2).......

                       (3)......

                       (4).......

Do you have any other dependent relatives living with you? (please tick)

NO
YES

If YES, please specify......................

Husband's employment:..........................

Could you please give full details of all your educational qualifications

Were you working before you had children?

NO

YES

If NO, please ignore Section B and go on to complete Section C

SECTION B

1 Did you leave work specifically to have children?

NO

YES

2 If NO, why did you leave?...................

3 If YES, how long into pregnancy did you work?(weeks)

4 What was the last paid job you did?

5 How long had you been doing that?(years)

6 How long ago did you leave that job?(years)

7 Overall, how much satisfaction and enjoyment did you
get out of working?
(please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

0   100
No satisfaction and   Total satisfaction
enjoyment at all   and enjoyment

8 What were the main factors that contributed
to this?

9 How much satisfaction and enjoyment do you
get out of being at home with children?
(please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

0   100
No satisfaction and   Total satisfaction
enjoyment at all   and enjoyment

10 What are the main factors contributing to this?

11 What, if any, are the main problems associated with being
at home rather than at work?

12 Have you thought about going back to work?
(please tick)

| NO |
| YES |

13 If NO, can you say why not?

14 If YES, why?

15 Is it something you would like to do
in the foreseeable future?

| NO |
| YES |

16 When would you **like** to go back to work?

17 When do you think it would be **possible** for
you to go back to work?

18 Would you like to go back to the sort of job
you had before?

| NO |
| YES |

19 If YES, what sort of problems, if any, do you
anticipate in going back?

20 If NO, what sort of work would you like to do?

21 What would you expect to get out of working again?

22 What do you think the attitudes of your husband/close family would be to your returning to work?

23 What do you think the attitudes of your friends would be to your returning to work?

24 If you have recently left work, what do you think the attitudes of your ex-colleagues would be to your returning to work?

25 Would the salary be an important consideration in your decision to retutn to work?
(please tick)

NO
YES

26 Do you foresee any problems in actually getting
the sort of job you want?
(please tick)

NO
YES

27 Do you expect to have to undertake any form of
training/retraining before going back to work?
(please tick)

NO
YES

28 If YES, please specify

29 Would you be **prepared** to undertake some form
of training?
(please tick)

NO
YES

30 Is there any specific help/information/training that
you think would be of particular use to you before
returning to work?
(please tick)

NO
YES

31 If YES please specify

32 What, if any, are the main problems you anticipate
in returning to work?

SECTION C

This questionnaire asks about your general well-being. Please read each question carefully and decide how often the symptoms have bothered or distressed you in the last six months.

(Please ring appropriate response)

How often over the
last six months.......

1 have you been forgetful?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
2 have you been bothered by thumping of the heart?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
3 have you become annoyed and irritated easily?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4 have you been easily bored?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
5 have you had difficulty in falling or staying asleep?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
6 has your face become flushed?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
7 have people considered you to be a nervous person?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
8 have you had to repeatedly clear your throat?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
9 has it been hard for you to make up your mind?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
10 have you had pains or soreness in your eyes?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
11 has your skin broken out in a rash when you have been upset or excited?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
12 have you got tired easily?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
13 have you had numbness or tingling in your arms or legs?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
14 have things tended to get on your nerves and wear you out?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
15 have you done things on impulse?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

How often over the
last six months.......

16 have your feelings been hurt easily?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
17 has your thinking got mixed up when you have had to make up your mind quickly?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
18 have you been needing a good stiff drink?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
19 have you bitten your nails?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
20 have you been scared when alone?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
21 have you had pains in the heart or chest?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
22 have you worn yourself out worrying about your health?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
23 have you shaken or trembled?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
24 have you been troubled by stammering?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
25 have unfamiliar people or places made you afraid?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
26 have you experienced loss of sexual interest or pleasure?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
27 have you cried easily?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
28 have you been tense and jittery?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

GWBF1

GWBF2

33 If there are any other comments you would like to make, please write them below.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

3) QUESTIONNAIRES USED IN THE FACTOR VALIDATION STUDY

WOMEN AND WORK

I am interested in finding out what is important to women when they think
about the work situation. In particular, I'd like to know what you feel
was most important to you when you were last in paid employment.I would
therefore like you to take some time out to think about the factors that
contributed to your **enjoyment** of your last job.

When you've done that, would you turn over the page and read through the
list of suggested factors together with the examples provided. On the
following page is a list of the same factors on their own, and your task
is to rank these in order of importance. Further instructions are given
on each page.

Please fill in your name and address below.
All information that you provide is for research purposes only, and will
be treated in the strictest confidence.

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR HELP

        NAME

        ADDRESS

If you have any queries, please contact Ginny Lawes on Nottm. 506101
ext. 3725 or at the address below:-

Stress Research Group
Psychology Department
Nottingham University
University Park
Nottingham

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ENJOYMENT AT WORK

Please read the factors listed below. Examples are given under each heading, so as to make clear what is being referred to.

Physical Work Environment

eg   Good working conditions
Pleasant surroundings

Social Interaction

eg   Meeting people
Making contact with others
I enjoyed the company

Resource Utilization

eg   I was making the most of my training.
Talents being well used
I felt I was providing a useful service.

Financial Benefits

eg   I liked being financially independent.
Good pay

Job Satisfaction

eg   Interesting and varied work
Personal satisfaction and fulfilment from the work

Travel

eg   I enjoyed moving around a lot.
Working abroad meant that I got to see new places.

Intellectual Stimulation

eg   Challenging and stimulating work
I had to use my brain.

Self Image

eg   Feelings of self worth and respect
Good self image

Please rank these factors in order of importance - ie put no. 1 against
the one that you feel was most important to you when you were last
working, no. 2 against the second most important and so on. Please make
sure that you put a number against all the factors in the list.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ENJOYMENT AT WORK

Factors   Ranks   1-8

Physical Work Environment   _____

Social Interaction   _____

Resource Utilization   _____

Financial Benefits   _____

Job Satisfaction   _____

Travel   _____

Intellectual Stimulation   _____

Self Image   _____

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

WOMEN AND WORK

I am interested in finding out what is important to women when they think about the work situation. In particular, I'd like to know what your reasons were for **thinking about going back to work.** I would therefore like you to take some time out to think about the factors on which this decision was based.

When you've done that, would you turn over the page and read through the list of suggested factors together with the examples provided. On the following page is a list of the same factors on their own, and your task is to rank these in order of importance. Further instructions are given on each page.

Please fill in your name and address below.
All information that you provide is for research purposes only, and will be treated in the strictest confidence.

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR HELP

        NAME

        ADDRESS

If you have any queries, please contact Ginny Lawes on Nottm. 506101 ext. 3725 or at the address below:-

Stress Research Group
Psychology Department
Nottingham University
University Park
Nottingham

REASONS FOR HAVING THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK

Please read the factors listed below. Examples are given under each heading so as to make clear what is being referred to.

Age

eg   If I leave it much longer I'll be too old.

Financial Benefits

eg   I liked being financially independent.
      Good pay

Self Image

eg   Feelings of self worth and respect
      Good self Image

Time Issues

eg   I've got more time on my hands now - I'm bored.

Job Satisfaction

eg   Interesting and varied work
      Personal satisfaction and fulfilment from the work

Social Interaction

eg   Meeting people
      Making contact with others
      I enjoyed the company.

Intellectual Stimulation

eg   Challenging and stimulating work
      I had to use my brain.

Preferred Alternatives

eg   The grass is always greener.....
      I'd really prefer to be doing something else.

Please rank these factors in order of importance - ie. put no. 1 against the one that you feel was the most important factor when considering your reasons for having thought about returning to work, no. 2 against the second most important and so on. Please make sure that you put a number against **all** the factors in the list.

REASONS FOR HAVING THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK

Factors   Ranks   1-8

Age   _____

Financial Benefits   _____

Self Image   _____

Time Issues   _____

Job Satisfaction   _____

Social Interaction   _____

Intellectual Stimulation   _____

Preferred Alternatives   _____

THANK- YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

WOMEN AND WORK

I am interested in finding out what is important to women when they think about the work situation. In particular, I'd like to know what factors you felt to be important when considering the **benefits of future employment.** I would therefore like you to take some time out to think about what it is that you expect to get out of working again.

When you've done that, would you turn over the page and read through the list of suggested factors together with the examples provided. On the following page is a list of the same factors on their own, and your task is to rank these in order of importance. Further instructions are given on each page.

Please fill in your name and address below.
All information that you provide is for research purposes only, and will be treated in the strictest confidence.

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR HELP

        NAME

        ADDRESS

If you have any queries, please contact Ginny Lawes on Nottm. 506101 ext. 3725 or at the address below:-

Stress Research Group
Psychology Department
Nottingham University
University Park
Nottingham

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

Please read the tactors listed below. Examples are given under each heading, so as to make clear what is being referred to.

Social Interaction

eg Meeting people
    Making contact with others
    I enjoyed the company.

Intellectual Stimulation

eg Challenging and stimulating work
    I had to use my brain.

Family Respect

eg The family would think more highly of me if I was working outside
    the home.

Self Image

eg Feelings of self worth and respect
    Good self Image

Altruistic Motives

eg I'd make more of a contribution to society.
    I would be useful again.

Financial Benefits

eg I liked being financially independent.
    Good pay

Job Satisfaction

eg Interesting and varied work
    Personal satistaction and fulfilment trom the work

Improved Health

eg I'd have more energy if I was working.
    I'd feel better if I was out the house.

Please rank these factors in order of importance - ie. put no. 1 against
the one that you see as being the most important factor when considering
what benefits you would expect to get out of working again, no. 2 against
the second most important and so on. Please make sure that you put a
number against all the factors in the list.

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

Factors	Ranks	1-8

Social Interaction   _____

Intellectual Stimulation   _____

Family Respect   _____

Self Image   _____

Altruistic Motives   _____

Financial Benefits   _____

Job Satisfaction   _____

Improved Health   _____

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

4) QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE MAIN SURVEY

WOMEN AND WORK QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is concerned with exploring women's attitudes towards returning to work after a break for children. It is designed for all the women who attend family planning clinics, but you will not need to answer all the questions.The questionnaire is in 5 sections (A to E), and although everybody will be able to answer the questions in sections A and E, only certain parts of the remaining sections will be relevant for any particular person. If there are some questions that you cannot answer, please carry on to the next question or section as directed, or simply write "not applicable" (n/a).

If you are prepared to continue helping us and do not mind being contacted again, please complete the section on this page and return the sheet together with the questionnaire. This information will be stored separately and it will not be possible to identify individuals from the questionnaire data.

All information that you provide is for research purposes only, and will be treated in the strictest confidence. Please indicate below if you have any objection to this data being stored anonymously and analysed on computer.

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

NAME

ADDRESS

If you have any queries, please contact Ginny Lawes on Nottm. 506101 ext. 3725, or at the address below:-

Stress Research Group
Psychology Department
Nottingham University
Nottingham

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Will you please provide the following information:-

Age (years) _____

Marital Status
(please tick appropriate box)

Single

Married/ Stable relationship

Divorced/ Widowed

Number of dependent children (if any) _____

Age of children   (1) _____

                      (2) _____

                      (3) _____

                      (4) _____

Do you have any   other dependent relatives living with you?

NO

YES

If YES, please specify _____

Husband/partner's employment _____

SECTION A

1 Please give details of all your educational qualifications

2 Are you currently employed?
(please tick appropriate box)

NO

YES

3 If YES, please give details of your job:-

Do you work :-

(a) full-time

(b) part-time

4 If NO, please give details of your last job:-

5 How long did you work/have you worked in that job?

(years)

6 If you are currently working, have you had a career break
for family or other reasons?

NO

YES

7 If YES, how long was this break?

8 Overall, how much satisfaction do you/did you get out
  of working?
  (please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

No satisfaction   Total
at all   satisfaction

9 What are/were the main factors contributing to your satisfaction?

10 How stressful is/was your work situation?
   (please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

Not at all   Extremely
stressful   stressful

11 What are/were the main problems or sources of stress
   associated with this?

PLEASE GO ON TO SECTION B

SECTION B

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF YOU DO NOT HAVE CHILDREN
(IF YOU DO HAVE CHILDREN, PLEASE GO ON TO SECTION C)**

12 Do you plan to start a family at some point in the
   future?
   (please tick appropriate box)

NO

YES

If NO, please turn to Section E.
If YES, please go on to question 13.

13 If you are working at this time, would you expect to:-

(a)   just take maternity leave (if that is possible) ?

(b)   be away from work for a much longer period of time?

14 Can you explain why you chose (a) or (b)?

15 If you do leave work to have children, what problems, if any,
   do you anticipate in being at home with a child/children?

16 How stressful do you think this will be?
   (please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

Not at all   Extremely
stressful   stressful

SECTION B (continued)

17 What benefits or rewards do you expect to get out of staying at home with a child/children?

18 How satisfying do you think this will be?
(please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

|_____|

Not at all
satisfying

Extremely
satisfying

19 What problems do you think you might face in going back to work after a career break?

20 Overall, how stressful do you think the return to work will be?
(please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

|_____|

Not at all
stressful

Extremely
stressful

21 What do you think the benefits or rewards might be?

22 How satisfying do you think being back at work will prove to be?
(please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

|_____|

Not at all
satisfying

Extremely
satisfying

PLEASE GO ON TO SECTION E

SECTION C

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF YOU ALREADY HAVE CHILDREN

23 Are you:-

(a) at home

(b) at work

24 If you are at home, did you previously work and then stop work to have a family?

YES

NO

If YES, please go on to Section D
If NO, please go on to Section E

25 If at work, have you returned to work after a career break to have a family?

YES

NO

If YES, please complete this Section
If NO, please go on to Section E

26 Before you returned, what did you expect to get out of going back to work?

27 Were those expectations met?

NO   YES   IN PART

28 Why was this? (please give details)

29 What problems, if any, did you encounter in returning
   to the work situation?

30 What problems, if any, do you have in your role as a
   working mother?

31 What are the benefits or rewards of this situation?

32 Looking back, how much satisfaction did you get out of
   staying at home with your child/children?
   (please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

| |
No satisfaction   Total
at all   satisfaction

33 What were the main factors contributing to your satisfaction?

34 How stressful did you find this situation?
   (please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

| |
Not at all   Extremely
stressful   stressful

35 What were the main problems or sources of stress associated with being at home?

36 What were your main reasons for deciding to return to work?
(Will you please list these in order of priority)

37 What was the last job you were doing before you left to have a child/children? (please give details)

38 Overall, how much satisfaction did you get out of this job?
(please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

```
|_____|
```

No satisfaction   Total
at all   satisfaction

39 What were the main factors contributing to your satisfaction?

40 How stressful did you find the job?
   (please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

|_____|

Not at all   Extremely
stressful   stressful

41 What were the main problems or sources of stress
   associated with working at this time?

PLEASE GO ON TO SECTION E

SECTION D

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF YOU ARE AT HOME WITH CHILDREN

42 Have you worked since the birth of your first child?

NO

YES

   If NO, please go on to Question **47**

43 If YES, please give details of your employment history since that date

44 What problems, if any, did you encounter in returning to the work situation?

45 What problems, if any, did you face in your role as a working mother?

46 What were the benefits or rewards of the situation?

47 How much satisfaction do you get out of staying at home with your child/children?
   (please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

No satisfaction   Total
at all   satisfaction

48 What are the main factors contributing to your satisfaction?

49 How stressful is staying at home with your child/ children?
(please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

Not at all
stressful

Extremely
stressful

50 What are the main problems or sources of stress
associated with this?

51 Would you like to go back to work in the foreseeable
future?

NO

YES

52 If NO, can you say why not?

53 If YES, why?

54 What problems, if any, do you anticipate in going back
to work?

55 How stressful do you think the return to work will be?
(please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

|_____|

Not at all   Extremely
stressful   stressful

56 What do you think the benefits or rewards might be?

57 How satisfying do you think being back at work will
prove to be?
(please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

|_____|

Not at all   Extremely
satisfying   satisfying

58 Is there any specific help/information/training that
you think would be of particular use to you before
returning to work?

NO

YES

59 If YES, please specify

PLEASE GO ON TO SECTION E

SECTION E

PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS, WHATEVER YOUR
CIRCUMSTANCES.

Many people, when they assess their current situation, weigh
how satisfying it is, against how stressful it is. Do the benefits
and satisfactions outweigh the pressures and stresses, or vice
versa? I would like you to use the scale below to make an
overall judgement of your present situation.

60 Overall, how satisfying or stressful is your present situation?
   (please make a mark where appropriate on the scale)

```
|_____|_____|
```

Extremely   Neither   Extremely
satisfying   satisfying   stressful
                           nor stressful
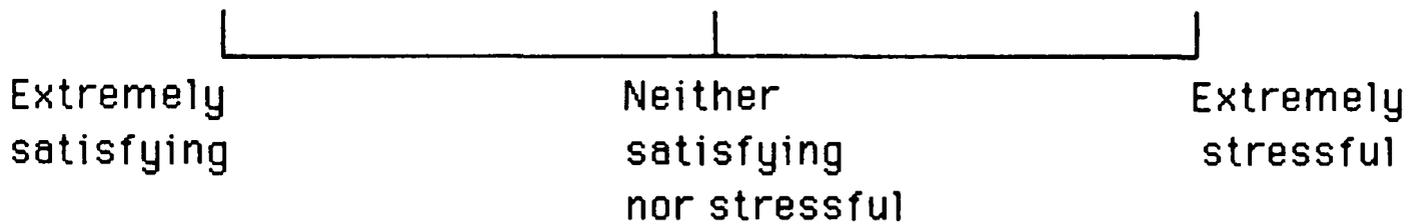
61 What are the main factors contributing to this?

PLEASE GO ON TO SECTION F

If there are any other comments you would like to make, please write them below.

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

5) QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE ROLE CONFLICT SURVEY

Text cut off in original

A study of Working Women

You will have recently received a letter from the Research Management Division requesting your cooperation in completing the enclosed questionnaire.

This questionnaire is concerned with exploring women's attitudes to their work, and the possible conflicts that may be experienced between work and other roles. The questionnaire is in six sections. Please complete all of the sections that are applicable to you.

If you are <u>male</u> please return this questionnaire, uncompleted, immediately.

The questionnaire has been devised as part of a research program at the Stress Research Unit, Psychology Department, University of Nottingham, with the kind cooperation of the Department o' Health and Social Security.

All information that you provide is for research purposes only, and will be treated in the strictes confidence.

Thank-you for your help.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided to:- <u>Rm B808 AFH</u>

If you have any queries, please contact......

Maria Mann or Dr Tom Cox   or   Ms M Colledge
Stress Research Unit   Rm B815
Psychology Department   Alexander Fleming House
Nottingham University   ext 6272
Nottingham
NG7 2QR
(0602) 484848 ext 3069

A STUDY OF WORKING WOMEN

Section I

Would you please provide the following details about yourself—

How old are you ? (write in years) _____

Are you: Single/Separated/Widowed/Divorced ☐

             (please tick one box)

        Married/Living as married ☐

Please write in the age/s of any dependent children you have living with you.
(children under 16, or under 18 and
full-time education) _____

Do you have any other dependent relatives living with you?   Yes ☐   (please tick one box)

                                    No ☐

If "YES", please specify _____

What is your Civil Service Grade ? (please write in). _____

Do you work ... Full-time ☐

                      (please tick one box)

         Part-time ☐

If part time, please state hours worked each week _____

Please turn to next page

Section 2

We are interested in how you see yourself. Below is a list of roles you might occupy. **Please tick those which apply to you.**

Each time you place a tick in a 'yes' box **please make a mark (a dash) on the scale provided to indicate how demanding, in general, you find the role.**

a) Are you a . . .

	YES	NO

b) 'How demanding do you find this role ?'

Wife — —

Not demanding ├─────────────────────────────────────┤ Extreme demandir

Mother — —

Not demanding ├─────────────────────────────────────┤ Extreme demandir

Daughter — —

Not demanding ├─────────────────────────────────────┤ Extreme demandir

Sister — —

Not demanding ├─────────────────────────────────────┤ Extreme demandir

Friend — —

Not demanding ├─────────────   ────────┤ Extremel demandir

Neighbour — —

Not demanding ├─────────────────────────────────────┤ Extremel demandir

Working Woman — —

Not demanding ├─────────────────────────────────────┤ Extremel demandir

Club Member — —

Not demanding ├─────────────────────────────────────┤ Extremel demandir

Voluntary Worker — —

Not demanding ├─────────────────────────────────────┤ Extremel demandin

Please turn to next page

Student   ——   ——

Not   Extremely
demanding |———————————————————| demanding

Girlfriend   ——   ——

Not   Extremely
demanding |———————————————————| demanding

Please add any other roles which apply to you in the spaces provided below,and place a mark on the scale to indicate how demanding you find the role.

Other   _____

Not   Extremely
demanding |———————————————————| demanding

_____

Not   Extremely
demanding |———————————————————| demanding

_____

Not   Extremely
demanding |———————————————————| demanding

Section 3

Often, when people attempt to fulfil a number of roles they experience some conflict between what is expected in these roles. Many of you will be family members and may have several roles in relation to your family, for example wife, mother or daughter. You will all have the role of 'worker', that is taking part in paid employment. In using the term 'Being Myself' versus for example, family member, I am interested in how your own needs, i.e. what you want for yourself, may be in conflict with those of the other role.

Set out below are some examples of roles that you might feel conflict with one another. **Please place a mark on the scales to indicate how problematic these roles are.**

Worker v's Family member   Not |———————————————————| Extremely
                                        problematic   problematic

'Being Myself' v's Family member   Not |———————————————————| Extremely
                                        problematic   problematic

Worker v's 'Being Myself'   Not |———————————————————| Extremely
                                        problematic   problematic

Please state briefly any such other conflicting roles you experience and mark (a dash) on the scales provided to indicate the extent to which they are problematic.

———— V's ————   Not |———————————————————| Extremely
                          problematic   problematic

———— V's ————   Not |———————————————————| Extremely
                          problematic   problematic

———— V's ————   Not |———————————————————| Extremely
                          problematic   problematic

———— V's ————   Not |———————————————————| Extremely
                          problematic   problematic

———— V's ————   Not |———————————————————| Extremely
                          problematic   problematic

Section 4

Please, answer this question if you are a mother.

Do you experience any conflict between your role of a mother and role as a worker, i.e. paid employee?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If 'Yes', could you please give details below of what these problems are? (for example problems with child care arrangements).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 5

People gain benefits from their work: a number of statements describing such benefits are set out below. **Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by placing a tick in the appropriate box.**

	Agree Strongly	Agree Slightly	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree Slightly	Disagree Strongly
'My work is satisfying'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
'I receive friendship at work'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
'I find my work stimulating'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
'Work is important for my self image'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
'My work is financially rewarding'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
'Work is important in providing a structure to the day'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please turn to next page

Section 6

People often experience difficulties at work: a number of statements describing such problems are set out below. **Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by placing a tick in the appropriate box.**

	Agree Strongly	Agree Slightly	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree Slightly	Disagr Strong
'I find my work hard to cope with'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
'Work takes up more of my time than I would prefer'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
'I find my work boring'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
'I feel socially isolated at work'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
'Work has reduced my self confidence'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
'I receive no job satisfaction'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
'I have no control over my work'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please turn to next page

Section 7

This questionnaire asks about your general well-being. Please read each question carefully and decide how often the symptoms have bothered or distressed you in the last six months.

If you find any of the questions below embarrassing, there is no need to answer that question.

How often over the
last six months.......

(please ring appropriate number)

	ALL THE TIME	OFTEN	SOME TIMES	RARELY	NEVER
1. Have you been bothered by your heart thumping?	4	3	2	1	0
2. Have you become bored easily	4	3	2	1	0
3. Have you experienced loss of sexual interest or pleasure?	4	3	2	1	0
4. Have you become easily annoyed or irritated?	4	3	2	1	0
5. Have you had to clear your throat?	4	3	2	1	0
6. Have you been scared when alone?	4	3	2	1	0
7. Has your thinking got mixed up when you have had to do things quickly?	4	3	2	1	0
8. When you have been upset or excited has your skin broken out in a rash?	4	3	2	1	0
9. Have you shaken or trembled?	4	3	2	1	0
10. Have you done things on impulse?	4	3	2	1	0
11. Have people thought that you are a nervous person?	4	3	2	1	0
12. Have you been forgetful?	4	3	2	1	0
13. Have things got on your nerves and worn you out?	4	3	2	1	0
14. Have unfamiliar places or people made you afraid?	4	3	2	1	0
15. Have you got tired easily?	4	3	2	1	0
16. Has your face got flushed?	4	3	2	1	0
17. Have you experienced numbness or tingling in your arms or legs?	4	3	2	1	0
18. Have you had difficulty in falling or staying asleep?	4	3	2	1	0
19. Have you been tense or jittery?	4	3	2	1	0
20. Have your feelings been easily hurt?	4	3	2	1	0
21. Have you had any pains in the heart or chest?	4	3	2	1	0
22. Have you been troubled by stammering?	4	3	2	1	0
23. Has it been hard for you to make up your mind?	4	3	2	1	0
24. Have you worn yourself out worrying about your health?	4	3	2	1	0

WO   UT