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# Facing the Caree/Family Dichotomy: Traditional College Women's Perspectives

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FACING THE CAREER/FAMILY DICHOTOMY: TRADITIONAL COLLEGE

WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES

by

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of

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GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a dissertation submitted by

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This dissertation has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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ABSTRACT


FACING THE CAREER/FAMILY DICHOTOMY: TRADITIONAL COLLEGE

WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES


Lisa M. Leavitt

Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education

Doctor of Philosophy

This qualitative study explored the experience of 32 traditional college freshmen women as they sought to choose a career with the idea of balancing career and family in the future. A traditional woman was defined as a woman whose central value system and cultural mores emphasize homemaking and childrearing as their primary role. Guided interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth descriptions of participants' experience. The interviews were transcribed and interpreted using a synthesis of qualitative methods based on Kvale's method. The six themes were as follows:

1. The concept of balancing careers and family life is not being discussed or addressed.

2. Participants saw their mothers' influence as the most significant in helping them come to their present decision about career and motherhood.

3. Education and a career are viewed as separate entities.

4. Participants reported experiencing both guilt and ambivalence over wanting both a career and a family.

5. Participants saw career and motherhood as mutually exclusive.

6. Participants thought of their ideas as being mainstream whether they wanted to work or stay at home while raising a family.

The findings suggested that much more needs to be done in terms of encouraging discussion and providing forums for further exploration, to help resolve some of the ambivalence and confusion traditional women experience in trying to balance family and career.

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Introduction

Over the last 60 years, both work life and family life have been greatly impacted by the changing role of women in the workplace. Current trends indicate that most women either expect to be, or are active participants in the work force and engage in both paid work and primary parenting responsibilities (McCracken & Weitzman, 1997). However, a variety of cultural factors have contributed to the polarization of these work and family roles. That is, cultural definitions of what it means to be a homemaker or to have a career have made these roles seem mutually exclusive (Raabe, 1996). This polarization has led to some role confusion for women. Some research suggested that many women dichotomize the work-family dilemma and can only see themselves as either a full-time homemaker, or a full-time career person, despite the fact that most working women continue to perform the bulk of the duties defined as full-time homemaking (Jackson & Scharman, 2002). This dichotomy may be particularly salient for women from more traditional backgrounds whose central value system, and cultural mores emphasize homemaking and childrearing as their primary role—especially if they pursue a college education (Machung, 1989).

*Purpose of the Study*

It may be that young women from more traditional backgrounds entering college find themselves in a setting where the primary focus and cultural expectation is centered on preparing for a career. Women from traditional backgrounds, although enrolled in college, may also be expected to begin turning their attention to marriage and full-time parenting. However, the very act of being in college suggests an interest in career development. While education may be seen as valuable for its own sake, it is typically associated with the idea of preparing for a career outside of the home. The conflicting pressures to get married and

become a full-time parent, and choose and establish a career seem to create a particularly poignant dilemma for traditional women in college. To date, no research has explored the experiences of traditional women facing these issues. The purpose of this study is to explicate the experience and perspectives of traditional women college students as they engage the intersection of these seemingly contradictory pressures of becoming a full-time homemaker and having a career. The focus of the project will be to understand how these women perceive this seeming contradiction and explore their ideas with regards to trying to reconcile it.

*The Impact of Historical Perspectives on Women's Career Theories*

Historically, theoretical attempts to address women's career issues have been limited and inconsistent. Fitzgerald, Fassinger, and Betz (1995) suggested that the majority of early work and career theories ignored women's career issues altogether. This neglect was based in a bias that focused primarily on the career development of European American men because they dominated the mainstream work force and research focus. Early work on career issues was said to have begun with Frank Parsons who took the "matching men and jobs" (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 3) approach to career decision making, as outlined in his 1909 book, *Choosing a Vocation* (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Since that time the field of vocational psychology has made considerable progress in both the theory and practice of career development. However, while career theorists such as John Holland, Donald Super, John Crites, The Ginzberg Group and Anne Roe have focused on various aspects of career choice and development, the bulk of this work has continued to center on men's experiences (Osipow, 1983). Career theorist Leona Tyler (1978) said "Much of what we know about the stages through which an individual passes as he [sic] prepares to find his [sic] place in the

world of work might appropriately be labeled 'The Vocational Development of Middle Class Males'" (p. 40).

This trend continued through the era of the industrial revolution, which along with the human resource pressures of World War II brought many more women into the work force. As more women began to enter the workforce, interest in women's career issues became more acceptable. The scholarly trend was to expand on existing male dominated theories to include women's issues, in the hope that they would be sufficient for the description of women's vocational behavior (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Jackson & Scharman, 2002,). However, the existing theories were still closely linked to cultural perspectives of women long held by society, and were dominated by themes of "gender subordination, sex segregation and gender specific socialization" (Barnett & Hyde, 2001, p. 783).

Significant developments in theories about women's career issues did not come about until the early 1970's, when Osipow conducted a seminar on women's career issues, which resulted in his publication in 1975 of *Emerging Woman: Career Analysis and Outcomes* (Fitzgerald & Harmon, 2001). Osipow was the first to outline a comprehensive treatment of the career development and vocational psychology of women, much of which forms the basis of our current views on women's career issues (Fitzgerald & Harmon, 2001). Osipow presented a number of scholarly works that focused on topics that formed barriers to women's career development such as social factors, gender stereotyping, and parental influence (Osipow, 1975). Osipow's work also drew attention to women's' increasingly visible economic contributions and helped to debunk the myth that women had no real vocational interests (Fitzgerald & Harmon, 2001).

By the early 1980's other theorists such as Gottfredson (1981) followed Osipow's lead and began to look at women's career challenges as being separate from men's. Gottfredson postulated that occupational sex type was the most durable factor to influence both men and women in limiting their consideration of careers (Betz, Heesacker & Shuttleworth, 1990). Although theorists were now seeing the need for women to be included in career issues, career options for women were, for the most part, still limited to a narrow range. Many women still tended to choose from a relatively small group of traditionally female career options such as teaching, nursing, or clerical work (Arnold, 1987; Brown, 2002).

As outlined by both Gottfredson and Osipow, the lack of attention given to women's career issues originated from a variety of sources, namely social factors, values and role expectations, gender/sex stereotyping, and parental influence. A closer look at each of these areas individually provides us with a better understanding of their particular effect on women's career development.

*The Impact of Social Factors and Gender-Stereotyping on Women's Careers*

Research shows that social factors, values and role expectations have a significant impact on women's career development. Eagly (1994) suggested that our gender-related behavior is shaped by our social roles, and that behavior will be constrained by its social context and, in particular, by men's more dominant social position. Hartung (1998) suggested that cultural values, particularly social relationship values, play an important role in the career development process, as values develop so that we as individuals can meet our needs in socially acceptable ways. Since the early 1900's societal norms and values originating from 19th century English upper middle class society suggested that women didn't "work"

since their "place" was in the home (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). This was made evident by the predominant ideal, which delineated that paid employment for women was the exception not the rule (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). If women did work they did so in one of two cases, either only preliminary to marriage and child bearing, or if they were "unfortunate enough to be without a husband – the unlucky spinsters and the widowed" (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 4). This fostered the idea that a woman's work cycle ended once the family life cycle began (Perun & Bielby, 1981). The only roles for adult women sanctioned by society were those of wife and mother. Those not married and engaged in mothering activities were often shunned socially and stigmatized as old maids or spinsters (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). More importantly, they were economically deprived, as those occupations that might provide a decent livelihood were considered not within the scope of women's work (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

This perspective was perpetuated up until the 1940's and 50's when the traditional family model of the stay-at-home wife and the working father was still very much a part of both the American culture and the career development theorists (Reskin & Padavic, 1994). Barnett and Hyde (2001) suggested that many popular social theorists such as Parsons were still supporting this idea. In 1949, Parsons purported "that family functioning is optimized when the husband specializes in market work and the wife in domestic work" (T. Parsons, 1949, p. 20).

At the time that Osipow published *Emerging Woman: Career Analysis and Outcomes* in 1975, less than 40% of all women were employed outside of the home, which suggested that the idea that women's primary role was that of wife and mother was still upheld by society (Fitzgerald & Harmon, 2001). Over the last 30 years social roles regarding women's

career issues have been changing, albeit gradually. Fitzgerald and Harmon (2001) purported that many basic assumptions about the fabric of social life in the United States have changed, particularly with reference to women's careers, and that most Americans assume that most women will have meaningful work involvement throughout their lives.

Gender stereotyping has also contributed to the lack of interest in women's career development. Lott (1997) said,

> The ideology of gender difference is ubiquitous in mainstream and minority United States cultures and has enormous significance for personal and social life. Our widely shared and strong beliefs about differences between men and women in interests, competencies, and roles are not benign or neutral, and their consequences are profound and continuous throughout the course of one's life. (p. 279)

Beliefs about gender qualify as stereotypes, are learned early in life, and are difficult to change because they are subscribed to widely, and reinforced by social consensus (Lott, 1997). This is as true in the realm of women's career choice as in any other arena. Beginning with Freud in the early 1900's, and continuing with T. Parsons in the 1940's and 50's and Erikson in the late 1960's, theorists adhered to a strict belief in gender differences, seeing men and women as more dissimilar than similar with regards to career aspirations (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

In his book *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* published in 1905, Freud indicated that the early years are critical for later personality development, and that the experience is vastly different for boys and girls. The major focus for boys is to achieve a healthy sense of himself as a whole, to form a loving relationship with his wife, and to become a competent, viable person in the world of work. On the other hand he saw the task

of identity development for girls as being incomplete without the fulfillment of marriage and child bearing (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Furthermore, he believed that women who displayed, submissiveness, passivity, attention to others, and selflessness were highly valued in society, and that these traits were best exemplified within the role of wife and mother (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Implicit in Freud's theory is the idea that failure to successfully develop identity in these areas for both men and women may lead to "serious negative psychological consequences" (Barnett & Hyde, 2001, p. 783).

Gender stereotyping was also reinforced by the notion that marriage and the traditional division of labor—that is, men "work" and women stay at home—served a function which provided certain stability to the social fabric. This idea was supported by Parson and Bales (1955) who believed that a successful marriage and family lifestyle are the result of a functional asymmetry in marriage, where the husband worked outside of the home, and the wife focused on homemaking and childrearing responsibilities (Parson & Bales, 1955). They attributed this to the fact that the biological ability of women to bear and nurse children established a primary relationship between the mother and child. While this is generally acknowledged to be true, Parsons and Bales (1955) stance suggested that women who cannot perform this biological function are therefore relegated to the realm of work.

Twenty years later Erikson, a follower of Freud, expressed a similar idea and believed that women's sense of identify is somehow incomplete without marriage and motherhood, as demonstrated in the following quote:

Young women often ask whether they can 'have an identity' before they know whom they will marry and for whom they will make a home…. Something in the young

woman's identity must keep itself open for the peculiarities of the man to be joined and that of the children to be brought up. (Erikson, 1968, p. 283).

Inherent in the view of all three popular theorists, Freud, Parsons, and Erikson is a concept that sends a very powerful gender stereotypic message, that women and men have very different psychological needs and mutually exclusive views towards their roles in both family and careers. Women are biologically and psychologically equipped for motherhood and marriage, whereas men are biologically and psychologically equipped for the world of work (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

Recent research challenging gender stereotyping with regards to the world of work and family suggested that for both men and women the roles of parent and partner are ranked equally in prominence, and are higher for both genders than the role of employee (Thoits, 1992). While this may be true, the societal expectation based in gender stereotyping still has an effect on how the work/family roles are played out for men and women. The gender ideology, which in the past has mandated that women are responsible for the domestic family work and men are the providers and engage in paid employment, has repercussions for women currently engaged in the work force (Lott, 1997). Lott's (1997) research indicated that "wives across ethnic groups in the United States, are responsible for more housework and child care hours per week than are husbands, regardless of employment status and regardless of financial contribution to the household" (p. 285). Other research indicated that for married women with children as work responsibilities become more involved their household chore activities increase, while for married men domestic activity decreases as work responsibilities increase (Perkins & DeMeis, 1996). While our greater understanding of gender stereotyping appears to have provided more opportunities for women to enter the

workforce, it seems to have done little to address the issue of balancing work and family, which is now perhaps the more salient issue for women.

*Parental Influences on Women's Careers*

Parental influences have also impacted women's career choice. Early research in this area by Sorensen and Winters (1975) focused mainly on maternal role models, maternal identification and parent's socioeconomic status. They noted that women whose mothers were employed were more likely to work than were those whose mothers were full time homemakers. They also found that the socioeconomic status of parents played a role in career choice, with respect to women's perception of opportunities realistically available and knowledge of options. Sorenson and Winters (1975) also suggested that parental identification was related to the types of careers women pursued, in that they were most likely to pursue careers they were familiar with and had seen their parents engage in.

Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) suggested that while parental identification plays a part in the careers women choose, the greater influence may be the attitudes their mothers hold towards work. Farmer (1976, 1980, 1985) supported this view and considered maternal support for women working as an important influence, and found it to have a direct influence on girls' long-term career motivation.

*The Work/Family Conflict*

Over the last 20 years, we have seen continued scholarly interest in women's career issues, as more women enter the workforce. Women now make up over 50% of the U.S. labor force (Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1998). Current trends indicate that most young women expect to be active participants in the work force and engage in both work and family responsibilities (McCracken & Weitzman, 1997). Research indicates that while both high

school girls and female university students expressed greater levels of commitment to home and family than their male counterparts, they were equally committed to work and careers (Hartung & Rogers, 2000).

In spite of the fact that progress has been made with respect to understanding career issues for women, little attention has been paid to the most pressing issue for women, that of reconciling work and family responsibilities (Jackson & Scharman, 2002). Weitzman (1994) purported that while women's career goals have been aligning themselves more closely with those of their male counterparts, women's desire to be involved in family roles has not diminished. They envision lives integrating the two domains rather than seeing themselves as having to make tradeoffs between work and family life (Peake & Harris, 2002). According to Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) literature surveys regarding the career-family interface for women overwhelmingly indicate that the main limitations of women's career development are family factors. While the family-career balancing act is also pertinent to men, research suggested that the majority of responsibility for doing so lies with women (Fassinger, 1990). Valdez and Gutek (1987) held that the interdependence of work and family life is more problematic for women than men because of the greater demands of family responsibilities. By the same token, women's roles in the work place are more vulnerable to family demands than are men's work roles (Pleck, 1984).

There is compelling research that outlines the conflict most women experience in trying to juggle employment and family responsibilities (Crosby, 1987; Hartung & Rogers, 2000; Kaltreider, 1997; Moen, Chesley, & Shore, 1998). Hartung and Rogers (2000) stated that professional women who show equal levels of commitment to work and family report significant conflict between these two roles because of perceived expectations that they

should participate less in work life and more in home and family life. Sanders, Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall, and Steele-Clapp (1998) purported that women appear to understand the reality that they are likely to experience asymmetrical relationships between work and family, despite the fact that idealistically they see themselves as being able to balance the two spheres. According to Peake and Harris (2002) the difficulty lies not in women desiring a multiple role, balanced lifestyle, but is due more to "an overriding confusion about how to go about interfacing the two roles"(p. 406).

*Pioneering Career Alternatives for Women: Family Friendly Careers*

Some research has explored the experiences of women who have pioneered alternatives to the inherent bind of being expected to be a full-time employee and a full-time parent. Jackson and Scharman (2002) reported that some women are able to find a meaningful balance between work and family responsibilities by creatively constructing their careers to adapt to their family responsibilities. However, these women reported that they only came to these ideal situations by bucking the prevailing cultural pressures. They also reported that they went through college with the expectation that they had to choose between having a legitimate career and being a full-time homemaker

*Conclusion*

The dilemma this work-family conflict presents to women is an issue, not only during their working years, but may well impact the career decision-making process for women throughout their development. Brown (2002) suggested that gender is a constraining factor in the career decision-making process for women, as they tend to have a stronger orientation to other life roles, particularly marriage and motherhood. Again, this may be particularly true for women from more traditional backgrounds whose central value system, and cultural

mores emphasize homemaking and childrearing as their primary role. Brown (2002) further posited, "Cultural and work values are the primary variables that influence the career decision making process and the occupation chosen" (p. 49). This being the case, women from cultures with traditional views of both work and parenting are likely to face additional challenges in making meaningful decisions about these aspects of their lives.

Machung (1989) has suggested that traditional college-age women see career and family as dichotomous, and anticipate career interruption in order to raise a family. Little else has been done to research how they currently go about choosing a career and planning for a family with this in mind. The purpose of this study is to more fully explore the experience of traditional female college students as they face the dichotomy between choosing and preparing for a career and planning for family life.

Review of the Literature

Over the last 50 years many researchers concerned with career issues have begun to focus on the unique challenges faced by women in the workplace. A review of the literature suggested four main subject areas that have led to the current views on women's career issues as they relate to the work-family dilemma. These are: (a) cultural perspectives about the gender differences long held by society which defined women's role in the workplace; (b) historical events which have impacted the economic need for, and importance of, women's contributions to the work force; (c) the development of career theories steeped in the foundation of male dominated career issues, rather than the development of new and original theories pertinent to the issues faced by working women; and (d) the distinct challenge faced by women in balancing responsibilities in both work and family life. An in depth look at each of these areas provides a greater understanding of the development of women's career issues.

*The Influence of Cultural Perspectives*

The discussion centering on the roles of males and females and the influence culture has had in defining these roles, has been evidenced since the earliest writings of mankind. Whether these early writings were religious, political, or philosophical in nature, many contained not only references to the role played by both genders, but suggested male superiority and female submission to their male counterparts. For example, as early as *c*.50-c.115CE, Ban Zhao, philosopher and historian to the Han Dynasty, wrote, "If a husband does not control his wife, then the rules of conduct manifesting his authority are abandoned and broken. If a wife does not serve her husband, then the proper relationship (between men and women) and the natural order of things are neglected and destroyed" (Weisner-Hanks, 2001, p.185). Many of the first written law codes included legal provisions that outlined the role of

men and women as is evidenced by the laws of Babylonian king Hammurabi written around 1750 BC which stated that a husband could divorce his wife if she "made up her mind to leave in order that she may engage in business, thus neglecting her house and humiliating her husband" (Weisner-Hanks, 2001 p. 26). The advent of Christianity reinforced the concept of a wife cleaving unto her husband, and formed the basis for many of the cultural perceptions American society held regarding women's roles up until the late 1950's and 60's (Weisner-Hanks, 2001).

Many of the foundations for the belief systems of American society are derived from Judeo-Christian, European philosophies. This holds true for our cultural perspectives on men and women. Though there have been writings about gender roles and gender stereotyping for many centuries, it wasn't until the late 18th century that theorists began to look at the differences between the genders in terms of personality development, and to provide some sort of explanation for those differences. While there were many prominent personality theorists in the late 19th and early to mid 20th century, such as Bandura, Piaget, Adler, Jung and others, perhaps the most influential theorists were Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson, in that they laid the groundwork for much of the work that followed.

Freud's theory was based in his belief that the early years of life are the most crucial in setting the stage for later personality development (Corey, 2004). He postulated that individuals pass through certain psychosexual stages, one of the most crucial being the phallic stage from age 3 to 5. Freud identified the processes involved in passing through this stage as being significantly different for boys and girls and as involving the resolution of sexual longings and conflicts (Corey, 2004). For boys it was centered in what Freud called the Oedipal Complex. Healthy personality development for boys during this period includes

an attachment to his mother, his discovery that he has a penis, an eventual abandonment of his mother as a love object and identification with his father. If a boy passes through these stages properly he is ready to establish a loving relationship with a woman and to take his place as a man in the world of work, having a healthy sense of his place and importance (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

According to Freud the task for a girl at this juncture is quite different and marked by contrasting developmental milestones. This process for females is based in the Electra Complex, and centers on the idea of penis envy (Corey, 2004). Freud believes that a girl begins life with a strong love relationship with her mother. The development of a healthy personality begins when she transfers her love to her father due to her discovery that her mother does not have a penis. A girl then comes into competition with her mother for her father's love, and when she realizes that she cannot replace her mother she begins to identify with her and to imitate her behaviors (Corey, 2004). According to Barnett and Hyde (2001) Freud claims that girls never successfully complete this stage and need to marry and bear children in order to develop a complete sense of autonomy, and achieve complete personality development.

Erikson, a follower of Freud, based many of his assumptions of personality development on the same premises as Freud. He differed in that he saw developmental stages as more psychosocial than psychosexual (Corey, 2004). He saw what he termed the industry versus inferiority stage as a time for developing an understanding of the physical and social worlds and a time to develop a sense of values and a sense of sex-role identity (Corey, 2004). Erikson suggested that if a boy successfully negotiates this stage he is on the road to healthy personality development and sense of identity in adulthood. On the other hand, a girl may

negotiate this stage successfully, but will still not feel complete or have a true sense of identity in adulthood without marrying and bearing children (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

The implication from both Freud and Erikson is that both boys and girls pass through certain stages, be they psychosexual or psychosocial, and that boys can successfully negotiate these stages and proceed to a healthy sense of identity independently. Girls, on the other hand, may pass through the same stages, but they will not have a true sense of identify until they are somehow united with a man through marriage and have the chance to bear children (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). This viewpoint may have been directly influenced by the white, middle class Victorian social climate in which they were developing their theories. The Victorian era delineated gender roles very clearly. Women stayed home and attended to domestic affairs, and men engaged in the workforce (Hymowitz & Weissman, 1990).

While Freud and Erikson were looking at gender roles from a purely psychological standpoint, much of what they said influenced not only the societies in which they lived, but also the early career theorists, such as T. Parsons, a well-known family sociologist writing during the same era. T. Parsons, while one of the first to write about vocational psychology ignored women's career issues altogether and postulated theories about men's and women's roles which reflected the societal and cultural norms established by Freud and Erikson. Much of his contributions were outlined in an article he wrote in 1949 entitled *The Social Structure of the Family*. As the title implies, T. Parsons' (1949) orientation in this area stems from his belief that masculine and feminine roles serve to maintain the structure and ensure the function of the family unit. T. Parsons maintained that "family systems work best when one member of the family—the male—takes on responsibilities of work outside the home or in his words "a full competitive role in the occupational system" (1949, p.263), and the other-

the woman -takes on the responsibility of "the dominant feminine role of housewife or of wife and mother" (1949, p. 264).

The ways in which this is accomplished according to T. Parsons (1949) is through socialization of children from an early age. He believed that both boys and girls are primarily socialized by their mothers, but in different ways. For boys this process entails first seeing his mother as the object of love and as the main agent of socially significant discipline. It is through her love of him and her showing disapproval and disappointment when he fails "to give good account of himself outside the home" (T. Parsons, 1949, p. 256), or when he does not conform to family rules, that teaches him his role as well as standards of acceptable behavior (T. Parsons, 1949). As he matures, he rebels against identification with his mother, a circumstance that mothers secretly, and usually unconsciously, admire and reward with their love. This is interpreted by the son as evidence of his growing masculinity, and in turn gives him the confidence to succeed in the world (T. Parsons, 1949).

For girls, the socialization process involves having the opportunity to mature by identifying with her mother from an early age and thus accepting the mother-role pattern (T. Parsons, 1949). The conflict for girls stems not from their need to break away from their mother but from the realization that in our society "a girl must seek her fundamental adult security – which, inherently in the structure of the situation, depends overwhelmingly on her relations to the one particular man she marries" (T. Parsons, 1949, p. 259). This is combined with "the discovery of what is, in the relevant sense, masculine superiority, along with the fact that her own security, like that of other women, is dependent on the favor—even the whim—of a man that she must compete for masculine favor, and cannot stand on her own two feet" (T. Parsons, 1949, p. 260). Parsons did acknowledge that this outlook allows little

opportunity for educational or occupational development for women, but concluded that while this may be a problem, it serves to maintain the system necessary for optimal family functioning.

Despite the fact that more women were entering the workforce these cultural norms persisted through the 1950's and 1960's. In 1987, Betz and Fitzgerald reviewed the literature on women's career development and claimed that little progress has been made toward changing the stereotypic views of men's and women's roles. They maintained that while these ideas may not be put forth by prominent theorists, they are reinforced in many other ways, namely "reinforcement and punishment, modeling, and the adoption of rules, schemas, or generalizations based on observations of others or as they are taught by others" (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 30). They believed this was accomplished in many ways. For example, they suggested that the researched showed that by giving children sex-typed toys and encouraging achievement in boys more than girls, parents are reinforcing the development of sex-typed behaviors (Etaugh & Hall, 1980). They also stated that the research showed that teachers as perpetuating the problem and often reinforce girls more for personality characteristics such as being polite, or well behaved, and boys more for academic achievement (Fagot, 1981).

The problem goes beyond those who have immediate personal influence on children and extends to influences outside of the home and school. Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) suggested that the influence of the media, literature and textbooks also strongly conveyed stereotypical masculine and feminine roles, and perpetuated the myth that "boys do; girls are" (p. 31). Betz and Fitzgerald went one step further and brought stereotyping into the

realm of work by implying that both adults and children have a tendency to divide occupations into male and female appropriate categories.

Feminist theory, while supporting much of the literature presented thus far, also suggested that two other predominant social constructs, namely unequal access to resources and the power differential between men and women in the work force have played an important role in the development of women's career issues (Lips, 1993; Mather-Saul, 2003). As early as 1984, Lipman-Blumen suggested that the two concepts were related, in that women do not have power in the work force because they do not have access to the resources traditionally associated with power in this arena. She posited that typically men have political, economic, technological, legal, educational, and occupational resources, as well as physical strength available to them to gain power (Lipman-Blumen, 1984 p. 20). Women on the other hand rely more on youth, intelligence, wit, beauty, sexuality and potential parenthood as sources of power (Lipman-Blumen, 1984, p. 21). She also suggested that men are socialized to use their resources in the public arena whereas women are socialized to use them more in the interpersonal arena (Lipman-Blumen, 1984, p. 21).

Other feminist theorists such as Lips (1993) have supported this idea. Lips, (1993, p. 106) defined power as "the capacity to have an impact on one's environment, to be able to make a difference through one's actions". She posited that in the past women have been excluded from having power and in order to achieve a more equal balance of power in the work world, two significant changes need to be made. The first is increasing women's access to not only resources but to the positions which control the resources. The second is increasing women's impact on the formation of policies that determine how major institutions function (Lips, 1993).

In terms of gaining access to resources, Williams (2000) reported that the best-paid and most influential jobs have requirements that are virtually impossible to meet for those who are the primary caregiver of small children, which role she suggested is still predominantly maintained by women. Research by both Schor (1991) and Williams (2000) stated that there has been a gradual increase in hours in the average work week for both blue-collar and white-collar jobs with good pay and good benefits. Williams (2000) and Mather-Saul (2003) further implied that employers are more likely to hire those who can fill the job requirements and since women are less likely to be able to do so due to child care responsibilities, they have less access to jobs with the money, status and power.

In the last 15 years research has shown that the stereotypic view of women in the work force is changing. Women now see themselves as making a viable contribution to the workforce, and as engaging in both work and family responsibilities. The dilemma is no longer centered on whether or not women should be contributing members in the work place. The current focus is based more on the idea that while they are now engaged in employment outside of the home, they still engage in the bulk of the work involved in childrearing and homemaking responsibilities, and struggle with finding ways of balancing the two worlds (Lott, 1997; Mather-Saul, 2003; Perkins & DeMeis, 1996).

*Historical and Economic Influences*

The division of labor between the sexes is a topic that has been debated since the early hunter-gatherer tribes roamed the earth (Weisner-Hanks, 2001). Some research suggested that women were primarily responsible for the gathering side of the equation, foraging for roots and vegetable matter, while the men were more responsible for the hunting and providing of meat (Weisner-Hanks, 2001). There is speculation as to whether or not

women were responsible for the first planted crops, as a result of them being primarily responsible for providing vegetable food stuffs (Weisner-Hanks, 2001). Others suggested that the system was more egalitarian in nature and that the tasks were split equally between the sexes (Weisner-Hanks, 2001). Whichever view one takes, the idea that both sexes contributed directly to the production of those things necessary to sustain life is apparent in subsistence level economies.

With the development of tools and better agricultural methods, families became more settled and likely to remain in one place. In America, this was particularly true during the pre-industrial era, from colonization to the mid 1800's. This era was characterized primarily as an agricultural society with the focus placed on families producing enough to take care of their own needs. The development of tools and improved agricultural methods made this possible. The advent of the plough changed the nature of the division of labor between men and women. Men were the ones tilling the land and caring for the animals and women became responsible for taking care of the household, providing food, making soap and spinning and weaving to provide cloth (Koziara, Moskow, & Tanner 1987). The effects of population growth and increased markets for more and better supplies gradually changed the economy to one based in production not only for personal use but also for monetary gain (Koziara et al., 1987). This in turn brought about the concept of working for money wages, and the desire to accumulate wealth, a task taken on by the male members of society. This was the beginning of increased gender hierarchy for men, as they were seen as having the power to increase the family's wealth and status (Weisner-Hanks, 2001). Women's involvement in contributing to the economic stability of the household came to depend on the family's level of success and ability to employ outside help, which was directly influenced

by the success of the husband (Koziara, et al., 1987). This lead to an increase in the gap between the classes, as women from the upper and middle classes were no longer required to contribute directly to the economic success of the family, but were able to focus on child rearing and running the household (Weisner-Hanks, 2001). The division of labor between men and women was rapidly becoming greater and more socially acceptable.

This continued until the industrial revolution. The focus switched from that of the home and production to that of the factory. Advances in the ability to manufacture, construct and transport goods, and the technological advancement in machinery changed the face of the workforce (Weisner-Hanks, 2001). Employers were in pursuit of the cheapest and most economical labor available and found it in the female workforce; particularly lower class women. They could be employed for far less than their male counterparts, as they were considered unskilled labor. This direct threat to the male working population lead to the development of craft unions intent on protecting their work rights and preventing women from entering their trade (Weisner-Hanks, 2001). While this reduced the entrance of women into the workforce to a certain extent, it did not entirely stop it. From 1870 to 1940 the percentage of females active in the workforce almost doubled from 9.7 % to 20%, due to the fact that women could be hired for less money (Koziara et al., 1987).

Around the same time as the onset of the industrial revolution, the invention of the typewriter in 1880 by the Remington Company introduced new work opportunities for women (Rothman, 1978). Until this time the clerical field was dominated by males. In order to increase sales, the Remington Company realized that it needed to train operators to efficiently use their machine. They understood that in order to be successful at typing a good grasp of spelling and grammar was needed. They recognized that lower class men did not

have the skills necessary for the task, and middle class men in clerical work would demand too high a wage, so they turned to the female, high school graduate as a source (Rothman, 1978). Between 1897 and 1902 the Remington Company trained and supplied 25,262 typists to New York City, and 23,368 typists to Chicago (Rothman, 1978). While this gives the appearance of thousands of women flooding the workforce, it should be pointed out that cultural and societal values still held that women should not work to advance their career but merely as a temporary stop gap before marriage and motherhood (Rothman, 1978).

The next significant historical event impacting women's involvement in the work force was the advent of World War II. Technology was advancing at a rapid pace enabling the manufacture of more sophisticated tools of war. At the same time over 10 million men had been drafted into the armed forces, leaving the factories manufacturing weapons with a hugely decreased labor force (Rothman, 1978). While women were not employed in vast numbers prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, their workforce participation rose dramatically from 6 million to 20 million between December 7, 1941, and July of 1944 an increase of almost 100% (Rothman, 1978). One of the most dramatic differences was the increase of married women with children now employed. By 1944 the number of single women employed was outnumbered by the number of married women, an unparalleled event in American history (Koziara et al., 1987).

Following the end of the war the number of women, particularly married women, employed in the labor force dropped significantly. This was due to the fact that not only were many of the weapons factories closed, but the men returning from war were given job priority over women (Koziara et al., 1987).

Other significant historical events include the development of laws and organizations supporting women's rights. In 1964, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act outlawed discrimination against race or sex, though little was done by the enforcing arm, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, to ensure the law's effectiveness in creating equal opportunity for women in the workforce (Rothman, 1978). In 1966, the women's movement played a part in establishing the first civil rights organization for women, The National Organization for Women (NOW) (Rothman, 1978). Their aims centered not only on establishing equal opportunity for women in the job market but also on helping women gain equal rights to education, and other aspects of society (Rothman,1978). NOW outlined its opposition "to all policies and practices – in church, state, college, factory or office – which, in the guise of protectiveness not only deny opportunities but foster in women self-denigration, dependence, and evasion of responsibility" (Rothman, 1978, p. 236).

*Theories of Women's' Career Development*

Historically theoretical attempts to explain women's career issues have been an extension of theories originally oriented toward White, middle class males (Richardson, 1993). Fitzgerald, Fassinger and Betz (1995) took the view that until the 1970's although women were entering the workforce, career and vocational issues unique to women were all but ignored completely.

The first real attempt to address vocational issues in any way was made by Frank Parsons in 1909 when he wrote *Choosing a Vocation* (Brown & Brooks, 1996; F. Parsons, 1909). While this effort by F. Parsons cannot be called a theory per se, it was the first conceptual framework for helping in the career decision-making process and did advance the interest in career development, albeit only for males, laying the foundation for future theories

(Brown & Brooks, 1996). F. Parsons' ideas stemmed from a three step formula which included:

> 1. a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, interests, ambitions, resources limitation and their causes; 2. a knowledge of the requirements, conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities and prospects in different lines of work; 3. true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts. (F. Parsons, 1909, p. 5)

He believed that individuals would be happier in their careers, and that employers would benefit both by increased production and reduced costs, if people actively sought out career options suitable to them, rather than leaving their career choice to chance (Brown & Brooks, 1996). This idea came to be known as *trait and factor theory*, and formed the basis for future career theories such as that proposed by Holland (Brown & Brooks, 1996). It should be noted that the theory had a very male oriented focus, centered on the experiences of the middle-class white male and did not take into account women's career development (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987).

The trait and factor approach was the main focus in career theories until a surge of theorists in the 1950's set forth a number of psychologically based new theories. These included the Ginzberg Group (consisting of Ginzberg, Ginsberg, Axelrad and Herma) in 1951, Donald Super in 1953, Anne Roe in 1956, and John Holland in 1959.

The development of the theory proposed by the Ginzberg Group began with an empirical investigation into the events that they believed influenced vocational selection (Osipow, 1973). They concluded that career development is a developmental process spanning the entire lifespan. They also concluded that career choices are usually irreversible

and characterized by compromise (Brown & Brooks, 1996). According to the Ginzberg group, there are four variables that account for vocational choice. Osipow (1975) identified these as follows: (a) the reality factor, which involves an individual considering environmental factors in their career decision; (b) the educational process can limit, or facilitate career choice depending on the amount of education the individual has about various career option; (c) the emotional factors such as personality and emotional response to a career have vocational concomitants; (d) the individual values, influence career choice in that we all place different values on careers and seem some as more worthwhile than others.

Two years after the Ginzberg Group, Donald Super proposed a theory which included aspects of trait and factor theory, but was also based somewhat in developmental and personal construct theories (Osipow, 1973). Super's theory was based in the life-span, life-space approach to career development (Super, 1980). His theory uses a graphical portrayal called the Life-Career Rainbow with two dimensions life-span and life-space. Life –span refers to the life stages an individual passes through which Super categorizes as childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middlessence, and senescence. The life-space dimension refers to the roles we play e.g., child, parent, daughter etc, and the social situation in which we live (Brown & Brooks, 1996). The two dimensions can be used like coordinates to plot an individual's current status with regards to career priorities and development (Brown & Brooks, 1006; Super, 1980).

Anne Roe based her career theory on Maslow's theory of personality and needs. She first published her ideas in 1956 in a book entitled *The Psychology of Occupations*. Roe suggested that career decisions began in childhood, where their early environments predisposed them to certain occupational groups (Brown & Brooks, 1996). Included in the

decision is the idea that we are driven by needs, or tendencies to expend our energies in certain ways. According to Roe the combination of being driven by needs and early childhood experiences molds the style in which individuals develop, including their career development (Osipow, 1973; Roe, 1956).

In 1959 John Holland proposed a theory based in the trait theory but which he expanded quite considerably (Osipow, 1973). Holland coined the term *interest typ*e, which he believed was a way of understanding how individual differed in behaviors, personalities and interest. The six types, Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E), and Conventional (C), when depicted graphically form a hexagonal design. Through the process of identifying interest items, an individual arrives at a type code, usually with one dominant type and two subtypes. Based on the interest type code an individual can explore careers that fit within the scope of that type (Brown & Brooks, 1996).

While some of the theories have a great deal of empirical support and have proven effective, all were based on the career development of the white, middle class male, and none of them included the unique challenges faced by women in their careers. When the interest in women's career issues began to increase in the 1970's, several of these existing theories were expanded to include women's career development, but none were aimed directly at helping women navigate the most challenging aspect of their career choice, that of balancing family and work responsibilities.

One of the first theorists to include women's career development issues in depth was Linda Gottfredson in 1981, when she wrote *Circumspection and Compromise: A Developmental Theory of Occupational Aspirations*. Gottfredson's interest in including women in her career theory arose from her own personal experience. In describing her

journey towards developing her theory, she wrote "My efforts also reflect more personal concerns aroused by, among other things, my odyssey from assuming that I would have a family instead of a career to struggling to have both" (Gottfredson, 1996, p. 125).

Gottfredson's theory is grounded in four basic concepts. The first is self-concept which she describes as "one's view of oneself, one's view of who one is and who one is not" (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 547). This could include elements such as abilities, appearance, values, gender, and place in society (Brown & Brooks, 1996). The second concept is images of occupations. Gottfredson believes that we all hold images of occupations, based on personalities of people in those occupations, rewards, conditions and the work associated with certain occupations, and the appropriateness of that work for different types of people (Brown and Brooks, 1996). The third concept is the idea that we organize the images we have of occupations into cognitive maps, with dimensions such as femininity/masculinity, occupational prestige and field of work (Gottfredson, 1981). Lastly we assess the compatibility of different occupations with our own self-concept. The greater we perceive the compatibility between our self-concept and the image we hold of certain occupations, the greater our preference is for that career. Gottfredson referred to this as congruence and person-environment fit (Gottfredson, 1981). Once again, while Gottfredson included women in her theory, she still did not address the issue of work-family conflict that most women face, in spite of the fact that she mentions this as a struggle she faced.

Since Gottfredson, the concept of women in the work place has become universally accepted in the U.S., and many of the stereotypes are no longer as prevalent or overt. It has been generally acknowledged that women are not a homogenous group but rather individuals with variability in interests, strengths, characteristics and abilities and that they are firmly

entrenched in the world of work (Fitzgerald and Harmon, 2001). It is also acknowledged that in spite of the inroads they have made in the work place they are just as firmly entrenched in assuming the majority of the responsibility for family life (Fitzgerald and Harmon, 2001). While some research has been done looking at the conflict women face in balancing family life and a career outside of the home, little has been done towards helping them resolve this dilemma.

Social Learning theory, while not specifically a career theory, has had impact on the development of both gender development in children and attitudes towards women in the work force (Buss, 1995). Cognitive development theory posited that children develop the stereotypic conceptions of gender from what they see and hear around them (Kohlberg, 1996). Sociological theories see gender as a social construction and hold the belief that gender development and differentiation lie in social and institutional practices (Geis, 1993). Social cognitive theory developed by Albert Bandura follows this more sociological view.

Social cognitive approaches suggested that the influence of cultural context and the active role of individuals in defining that context play a strong role in gender development (Struch, Schwartz, & van der Kloot, 2002). According to Bandura (1986) gender roles and conduct involve intricate competencies, interests and value orientations. These are promoted by three major modes of influence, modeling, enactive experiences and direct tuition. (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). All three models are used to govern interactions with the world around them.

A great deal of an individual's perceptions of his or her gender is obtained from models in one's immediate environment. Models may be parents, peers, siblings or extended family members, as well as significant persons in occupational, social, education and media

contexts (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). We learn to identify with models in different ways. For example, we obtain information about what is socially acceptable by imitating the actions of models. Berger suggested that we identify with the emotion of models. We are scared, repulsed or gratified by the same things as the models we see in our everyday environments (Berger, 1962). Modeling serves as a way to deduce what is socially or not socially acceptable within each individual's own culture and context, including the work context (Berger, 1962).

Enactive experience also serves to reinforce what is acceptable in a given context or culture. It is based on response from those in an environment to the conduct displayed by children (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Children develop and refine their concept of their own gender by observing the positive and negative consequences accompanying different patterns of behavior. For example, fathers tend to react more negatively than mothers to boys' feminine toy play (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Direct tuition serves as a way of informing people about the different styles of conduct connected to gender. Direct tuition comes from those found in the immediate social environment, and reinforces views about what is appropriate for the two sexes (Geis, 1993).

In all three models it should be noted that the individual plays a part in how the information is received and constructed. People do not passively absorb gender rope conceptions form whatever source happens to come their way, but rather they evaluatively construct generic conceptions from the information they receive (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Bussey & Bandura (1999) claimed that most gender-linked outcomes are socially prescribed and include socially based consequences such as approval, praise and reward for activities traditionally linked to same gender and disapproval or even punishment for those

linked to the other gender. This suggested that a social cognitive theory of gender development includes not only a means of learning and knowing about gender expectation, but also has a motivation component in considering what is acceptable for the two sexes.

Bandura and Bussey's (1999) belief in a motivational component regarding what is and what is not acceptable for the two genders, serves to reinforce cultural values and encourage women to stay within the more and norms suggested by their culture even when it comes to career choice.

This idea is supported by the more recent development of social cognitive career theory, which is based in Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Lent, Brown, & Hackett (1994, 2000), posited that "social cognitive career theory is concerned with the interplay between a variety of person, environmental, and behavioral interests that are assumed to give rise to people's academic and career-related interests, choices and performance outcomes." They suggested that self-efficacy and outcome expectations, are the two key building blocks of academic and career choice development, and are influenced by both personal and socially mediated experiences including modeling, subject mastery and encouragement (Lent et al., 1994, 2000).

If we give credence to the ideas of Bandura (1986, 1997) and Lent et al. (1994, 2000) that the influence of cultural context and personal and socially mediated experiences play a significant role in gender development, then we can assume that they also have an impact on how women view themselves in the workplace (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Women's career choice then, cannot help but be influenced by socially acceptable views of women both as workers and mothers in any given cultural context. This also holds true for the dilemma many women face in balancing career and family pressures (Jackson & Scharman, 2002).

This may be a more salient issue for women from more traditional backgrounds that see motherhood as a primary role for women and where motivation to adhere to cultural norms may be particularly strong.

*Perceptions of the Work-Family Conflict*

Research shows that in today's' society, most women anticipate being actively engaged in the work force, but also see themselves as involved in family roles (McCracken & Weizman, 1997; Peake & Harris, 2002). The change in the structure and make-up of the workforce over the last fifty years supports this idea. Statistics put forth by the Council of Economic Advisors (2000), report that in 1998, 60% of the entire female population were employed as compared to only 32 .9% in 1950. By 1998, 75% of mothers with children were in the paid labor force. In 1950, 13% of children in America lived in dual-earner homes as compared to 44% by 1998 (Council of Economic Advisors, 2000). According to Cohen and Bianchi (1999) the number of hours women work per week has also increased from 34.2 hours in 1978 to 36.1 hours in 1998 (p.26).

Along with the expectation of being involved in both work and family roles, most women anticipate conflict between the two, due in part to some of the stereotypes held in the past. Although they are now accepted as a viable entity in the work place, women often experience conflict between the role of worker and the role of parent, because of perceived expectations that they should participate more in home and family life than in work life (Hartung & Rogers, 2000). Many women, anticipating both a full time career and parenthood, while idealistically envisioning role sharing and balance of home activities with their husbands or partner, seemingly grasp the concept that in reality the relationship will be asymmetrical resulting in both greater responsibility for family life and greater potential for

role conflict on their part (Peake & Harris, 2002). Moen and Yu (1997) support this idea and contend that the "traditional gendered division of labor persists even when both spouses work outside the home, with women responsible for most domestic chores and timetables" (p. 2).

A very real issue for working women is the potential for added stress as a result of the conflict between the role of worker, and homemaker. Hochschild (1989) coined the term "The Second Shift" referring to women who leave one job--their full time employment--and begin their second full time job or shift, that of parent and spouse. Coser (1974) described work and family as "greedy" institutions, requiring vast amounts of energy, emotional investment and time. Fitzgerald and Harmon (2001) reported that as a result of their increasing participation in the work force women are now expected to cope simultaneously with two full-time jobs--one within the home, and the other outside of it. They also reported that "rather than 'having it all', women are now 'doing it all', and the cost to women, their families, and society is increasingly clear" (Fitzgerald and Harmon, 2001, p. 215). This being the case, it seems obvious that women involved in a career and still having the primary responsibility for home and family care are likely to experience time conflicts, and overloads in meeting the obligations of both worlds (Moen & Yu, 1997). Han and Moen (1998) gave credence to the idea that the work-family interface has placed added stress on women. They reported that "despite all their gains in the occupational sphere, many employed, and mostly middle class, women feel as if they are living divided lives, unable to integrate the multiple parts of their lives and frequently overwhelmed with frustration and guilt" (p. 5).

As mentioned earlier, while awareness has been raised with regards to the conflict that women experience, efforts to alleviate the situation have not necessarily followed. Some research suggested that there have been efforts by corporations to foster more family friendly

policies. For the most part, these have been in the form of increased fringe benefits, such as onsite day care facilities and modifications to work schedules, and have taken the form of individual accommodation as opposed to structural change (Gonyea & Googins, 1992). Raabe (1996) suggested that while such assistance as child and elder care programs, family educational seminars, and family counseling have become part of many companies family friendly policies, little real help has been offered in the way of time allowances for families such as reduced work time, use of leaves and alternative work arrangements. Furthermore, she purports that when part-time work, family leaves, compressed work weeks and flexible schedules have been implemented by companies, they are often accompanied by penalties such as career limitations, reduced chance of advancement, lower pay, and poorer working conditions (Raabe, 1996). This is particularly so for women, who often have greater need than men for altered work arrangements due to the pressures of family life (Gonyea & Googins, 1992).

Bailyn et al. (2001) suggested that the apparent reluctance of society in helping find alternatives to aid women with finding a balance between work and home has left the responsibility for doing so with individual families. Jackson and Scharman (2002) found that some families have devised ways of creating flexible work schedules that are more family friendly. For example, engaging in family decision making where both partners take equal responsibility, share goals and are willing to compromise, the use of creative pioneering where the possibility of alternative work schedules for both partners was utilized, and partner career flexibility, where both partners were willing to adjust their career goals, were a few of the methods found to be successful for families in their study (Jackson & Scharman, 2002).

Fitzgerald and Harmon (2001) posited that "the history of women's traditional roles as homemaker and mother continues to influence every aspect of their career choice and adjustment" (p. 215). Research suggested that this is true not only during their working years, but begins at the earliest stage, that of choosing a career the will fit with their family plan and desired lifestyle (Peake & Harris, 2002). While most young adult women see themselves as having a well-rounded lifestyle including both work and family, most fail to adequately plan for the combination of the two (Peake & Harris, 2002). Weitzman (1994) supported this, and suggested that with more career choices open to women than ever before there comes greater uncertainty and hesitancy with regards to making concrete career choices. Furthermore, she suggested that lack of planning is not the only barrier in helping them choose a career, it is as much a sense of not knowing how to go about planning for both worlds, and lack of available resources for helping them do so (Weitzman, 1994).

As of yet little research has been done in the area of the traditional women's view of conflicting roles. Machung (1989) suggested that many college-age traditional women envision a future of interrupted work and career plans for months, even years, during the early formative years of their children's lives, while traditional college age men have given little thought to career interruption either for themselves or their wives. This indicates that traditional college-age women see family and career as more of a dichotomy, as being mutually exclusive, rather than as a balance between the two. More research is needed in this area to explore the experience of traditional college-age women, who are on the brink of making both family and career decisions.

Method

A qualitative research methodology was used to conduct the research in this study. Researchers working within this paradigm attempt to understand the meaning that participants give to their experiences from the participants' point of view, and within the context in which those experiences happen (Moon, Dillon & Sprankle, 1990). According to six methodological assumptions outlined by Merriam (1988), qualitative research: (a) focuses more on process, or how things occur, than on outcome; (b) tries to capture the meaning that people give to their lives and experiences; (c) involves the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; (d) focuses on observations of participants in their natural setting; (e) involves collecting and analyzing descriptive data such as words and pictures, rather than numerical data; (f) builds or generates theories, concepts and hypotheses inductively from analysis of the detailed interactions and experiences of the selected participants (Cobb, 2001).

*Participants*

Participants for this study were 32 women enrolled as college freshmen at the time of the study. They were selected from three different universities self identified as being associated with philosophies that advocate traditional roles for women as defined earlier. While schools with a more religious philosophy were chosen to target in the site selection process, the focus of the study was not on religious women, but on women who identified themselves as being traditional in accordance with the researcher's definition.

The three institutions used in the study were Brigham Young University, Provo Utah, Concordia College, Moorhead Minnesota, and Gonzaga University, Spokane Washington. The schools were selected by conducting preliminary telephone interviews with counseling

and career center directors at each institution to confirm the traditional perspective of the school's culture and that work-family issues are typically salient for women at their institution.

Participants were selected on a volunteer basis from career exploration and life planning classes at each institution. Volunteers were recruited through instructors' announcements in these classes, and were paid $20.00 each for participating in the study. One class from each institution was selected. The instructor's received packets containing a letter for each of the female freshmen in their class, which they distributed during class time. In all, 39 women were initially contacted through classes at the three institutions. After receiving the letter, participants were asked to send an e-mail to the researcher indicating their interest in participating. Thirty-seven of the 39 contacted responded indicating that they would like to participate in the study. A further 26 freshman women contacted the researcher indicating an interest in participating and in being interviewed having heard of the project from roommates or friends. In keeping with the proposed study, only those women originally contacted through the classes were interviewed. Due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts, 32 of the 37 who responded were interviewed. The participants ranged in age from 18 years 1 month to 19 years and 7 months, with a mean age of 18 years and 9 months. One of the 32 participants was married, the remainder were single. There were 4 Latina women, 1 African American woman and 27 Caucasian women interviewed. Ten of the participants were from Brigham Young University, 13 were from Concordia College, and 9 were from Gonzaga University. All interviews were done within the last week of the semester in which participants were taking a career exploration or life planning class.

*Data Collection*

Data were collected using an unstructured interview format. The principal investigator was a doctoral candidate who has training and experience in qualitative methods. All of the interviews were conducted by the principal investigator, in person, and on site at the various institutions. A list of interview topics with guidelines and sample questions was used to help the interviewer avoid leading questions and to maximize the depth and breadth of interviewee responses (Patton, 1990). The interviews ranged from 22 to 51 minutes in length, with an average of 37 minutes. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then interpreted by the researcher using a synthesis of interpretive qualitative methods (Kvale, 1987, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1984). Participants also completed a brief demographic questionnaire and an informed consent form.

The philosophical foundation for the method of the study is based in a relational ontology (Jackson & Patton, 1992; Schwandt, 2000). That is, the fundamental assumption is that relationships are primary and necessary to understanding human experiences.

In keeping with this idea, the method used is based on an epistemological foundation that is both hermeneutic and dialectic (Jackson & Patton, 1992). A key tenet of this epistemology is that "understanding is something that is *produced* in [that] dialogue, not something *reproduced* by an interpreter through an analysis" [italics in original] (Schwandt, 2000, p. 195). Accordingly, Kvale's approach to interviewing was incorporated, as it supports this philosophy. It is the researcher's belief that a qualitative approach such as that outlined by Kvale (1987, 1996) was a suitable method for looking at the experience of traditional college women regarding social constructs which may affect their career choice.

This approach included the following aspects adapted from Kvale (1996, p. 30-31) by

Jackson, Smith and Hill (2003).

1. Attention to the everyday "life world" of the participants.

2. Efforts to understand the meaning of the themes in the dialogue.

3. Dialogue aimed at qualitative rather than quantitative knowledge.

4. Encouragement of in-depth descriptions of the participants' experience.

5. Encouragement of descriptions of specific experiences.

6. A deliberate openness to novel and unexpected perspectives.

7. Focus on the phenomena of interest without using restrictive questions.

8. Acknowledgement of possible ambiguities and contradictions in the dialogue.

9. Awareness of new insights that may come to interviewer and participant in the interview.

10. Knowledge that each interviewer brings varying degrees of sensitivity to different aspects of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

*Data Analysis*

The interpretation of the transcribed interviews used the same philosophical and theoretical assumptions as were used in conducting the interviews. The post-interview interpretive process is described below:

1. An unfocused overview of the text. This was an attempt to study the text with as few presuppositions as possible and to approximate the meanings articulated in the dialogue with the participants (Jackson & Patton, 1992; Kvale, 1987, 1996).

2. Interpretations through successive readings of the materials in which the investigator sought to uncover progressively deeper levels of meaning in the text (Hoshmand, 1989; Kvale, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1984).

3. Finding language that accurately conveyed the findings. Once valid interpretations had been made the researcher worked to effectively communicate the findings (Kvale, 1987, 1996). Precise description of the meaningful themes was the desired product.

The process of identifying themes is "a back and forth process between the parts and the whole" (Kvale, 1996, p. 48). The first reading is to get a sense of the general meaning of the text. The themes begin to emerge when the researcher then looks for deeper meaning and compares special expressions, single statements and interpretations to the more global meaning of the interview as a whole (Kvale, 1996). The primary researcher conducted the initial analysis. A faculty member served as an auditor of the analysis. The analysis was conducted as follows. First, the researcher conducted several successive reviews of the transcripts, to identify an initial set of themes. Themes that continued to be supported in successive readings of the transcripts were retained. Themes that did not have broad support in successive readings of the transcripts were removed. Once the researcher concluded the initial independent analysis, the findings were presented to the auditor for analysis. The auditor selected portions of the analysis to review in order to verify themes and check the methodology of the researcher. Themes were retained only if both the researcher and the auditor come to a consensus about their validity. Presenting the themes to the participants and having them comment on the verity of the themes vis-à-vis their own experience further assessed the validity of the themes in two ways. First, it provided participants with the opportunity to elaborate on the statements they made in the original interview, and second, it

provided them with the opportunity to comment on the interpretations made by the researcher (Kvale, 1996). Participant responses to the initial findings were incorporated as the researcher and auditor refined the themes. Twenty of the original 32 participants, were contacted on the telephone after the themes were developed to verify the themes.

*Interview Guidelines and Sample Questions*

The interviews were conducted using an unstructured format. A uniform introduction to the interview was given to all participants followed by questions. The following questions were typical of those that were asked in the course of the interview. Reflective listening and minimal encouragers were used to maximize participant responses and increase the depth of interview content. The actual wording of the questions was adapted to be appropriate to the context and the flow of the individual interviews.

1. I am interested in your perspectives on having a career and being a homemaker. Can you describe how you see these two roles?

2. What does your culture "say" about these roles and how you might fill them?

3. How do you see yourself being involved in a career and/or homemaking?

4. To what extent have your parents' career choices influenced your career decisions?

5. What has been the greatest influence to date in helping you with career decisions?

6. Do you have a career plan?

7. What do you see as the positive aspects of your tentative plan?

8. What do you see as the negative aspects of your tentative plans?

9. What are your immediate plans as your prepare for a career and/or homemaking?

10. How do the men in you life see women being involved in homemaking and careers?

11. If you could give advice to other women in your situation about the roles of career and homemaker, what would you say?

Results

Results in the study were obtained following the procedure outlined in the method section. Six general themes emerged from analysis of the interviews.

*Theme 1: The Concept of Balancing Careers and Family Life is Not Being Discussed or Addressed*

When asked how they formed their present opinions about balancing family and career, several participants expressed the idea that little was being discussed in terms of balancing family and careers in any of the areas in their lives, such as with parents, in classes and educational settings, or with their peers. While many of the participants acknowledged that they discussed women's roles, as well as potential careers choices with others, they do not directly address the concept of how to balance the two, or the particular challenges faced in being both a mother and having a career.

More importantly, it did not seem to be a subject to which the participants have given a good deal of thought to up to this point, especially in terms of which careers they may choose in order to balance the two. Many participants saw some careers as being more suitable to balancing family and their work, but are not discussing the topic, or asking for advice from other significant people in their lives such as parents, teachers, and peers.

Underlying this theme was the idea that they wanted more discussion on the topic, but that it had not occurred to them to ask, and they were unsure as to how to go about having such discussions.

With regards to their parents, participants said the following:

*Participant 3*. I talk with my parents about what I want to do, but I don't think we have ever talked about how I would do it and have a family, I mean work that is. I

guess I never thought about talking about it with my Mom because she didn't ever work, so maybe she doesn't know anything about it, but I have thought a lot about it myself, that's why I think I want to teach.

*Participant 5*. I have talked to my Dad about what he thinks I should do and he really wants me to go into something medical, I don't think he has really thought about whether I could do that and have a family, so we haven't discussed it. I don't think medicine is the right choice for me. I think it might be kind of interesting to see what he thinks about that, but I bet he won't even think it's important as he doesn't really have to balance between the two.

*Participant 29*. My dad really wants me to work and have a career, and we talk all the time about what I should be, and he really pressures me to go into business, but we haven't really talked about whether I would keep working or not after kids come along. My mom has never mentioned it either, even though she works, we just haven't talked about it. I am not sure what I really even want to know about it, but I do think about it.

*Participant 12*. I never really talk with my parents about it at all. They trust me to make my own decision. I think it would be nice to ask my mom what she thinks, as she worked and I don't know how she feels about it really.

With regards to teachers and other educational settings, comments were made as follows:

*Participant 7*. I am taking a career class right now and it has really helped me focus on what I want in terms of a major. We talked a bit about women's career issues, but it was more just about statistics or what percentage work and how it impacts kids. We

haven't really directly addressed the idea of balancing work and family. I guess you just figure it out on your own, which when I think about kind of frustrates me.

*Participant 2*. We haven't ever really talked about balancing career roles and stuff, but in one of my liberal arts classes we do talk about women's different roles, but we don't talk about the conflict I think I am seeing now. You know, come to think about it that makes me mad that we don't talk about that.

*Participant 11*. One of the class times in career class we had a woman come talk about going back to school after her husband died, and she was really good, 'cause she talked about how hard it was to have four little kids too. We only talked about it that once, and I really wished we could have spent more time on that, as that's where lots of us may be one day, and I am sure it comes up for us all, all the time in our mind.

*Participant 30*. I don't think we talked about it in our class, maybe once about how it might be hard to have both, but I don't feel like we talked seriously enough about it. I guess maybe it's not that interesting, or maybe it's not really thought of as a problem. I wish we would talk more about how you actually do it.

*Participant 14*. I have had career classes in both high school, and of course I am in one right now, and we talk a lot about women's careers, and they say we have more opportunities now and can do what we want. But, you know, they never say how you do that and be a mom. For instance, I would like to know more about what happens after you get your degree, then don't work for a while to stay home with your kids, like, how do you go back?

With regards to peers, participants said the following:

*Participant 22*. I think the guys I know want their wife to stay home which is okay with me, but I can't say for sure that's what they think. I think I need to talk about it with my future fiancé or boyfriend, but I don't know that I have actually talked with other guys about what they think women should do. We just haven't done that, it might be weird to discuss it with someone you weren't thinking about maybe marrying.

*Participant 9*. My roommates and I talk a lot about what we want to do, and we even talk about having families, and our future husbands and things, but we never talk about how to have both a family and a career. It just never came up, which sitting talking with you and saying that sounds kind of funny, I mean, why don't we talk about that if we all plan on doing it, and we know we are and I am sure we all wonder about it?

*Participant 15*. My friends and me, we don't we talk about that because it somehow seems strange, but really I think I never really thought about it until this moment, like that it might be a hard to do both, but really I think it will be hard. I think maybe we should see if we can talk about it more in the career classes.

*Theme 2: Participants Saw Their Mothers' Influence as the Most Significant in Helping Them Come to Their Present Decision About Career and motherhood*

Another strong theme that emerged was based on the idea that participants were more likely to base their perceptions of balancing career and family on what they perceived their mothers' had experienced in this area. This was also endorsed as the greatest influence on how they felt about family and careers. Almost all of the students specifically mentioned their mother and her experience as being the greatest influence on their ideas about career

and family. If their mother had stayed at home, whether or not she resumed a career later on in life, and they felt that she was happy wit that role, they were more likely to report that they too wanted to stay at home, as opposed to working while raising children. Some of the comments made by participants that support this were:

*Participant 6.* My mom stayed home with me and I can see how that has affected me for the good and so I don't know if this is what you want to hear, but for me I think I realized that why they advise mothers to stay home is for the benefit of the children. I want to be able to help my kids like that.

*Participant 17*. My mom taught me that the most important thing is to raise your kids to the best of your ability. She stayed at home which I think allowed her to do that. She talks a lot about how being a mom is the best thing that ever happened to her, and she doesn't want someone else raising her kids so I think that's the best way to do it really.

*Participant 19*. Why would you want to go to work and have someone else raise your kids? My mom didn't work and felt it was important to be there for me and my two brothers. I liked having her at home when I got home. She really is the one that has made me think the most about how I want to do it just like her.

For some participants, having their mother stay at home and not work while they were young was perceived as negative, and so they themselves seem to be more likely to want to work. If they perceived their mother as unhappy with not working, they saw working while raising their family as a positive choice for them. They made comments such as:

*Participant 4.* My mom was a trained lawyer before she stayed home with us kids. She always talks about one day going back and feeling really challenged and fulfilled.

I think it was hard for her to stay home. I think I want to work while I bring up my kids, because I want them to see you can do both and be happy.

*Participant 23.* I think it's hard for women who have an education to stay at home with their kids when they are small. My mom did that, she hated it. She went back to work last year, when I was a senior and when my youngest brother went to junior high, and I think she's happier. I think it's important for women to feel good, and so if I want to work when I have my kids I think that would be good for me.

*Participant 24.* I definitely want to work when I raise my kids, maybe stay home for the first four to six months but then go back. My mom stayed home with me and my sister, and she hasn't really done anything with her life, I think she's kind of bored since we went to school. She wants to go back to work now but feels that she can't because she can't do anything. I think you are more well rounded if you can do both.

Those participants who reported that they felt their mother's were happy in their work, seemed more likely to want to work themselves while raising children. Comments were made such as:

*Participant 26.* When I was younger my dad didn't have a job, and my mom went out to work, and she worked full time the whole time I was little and growing up. Now they both have a job and all six kids are really close, so it's kind of shown me that when the mom works, you can have a good family, a strong family and you can raise them and have a job. Especially with six kids who have all gone to college and are still close, I think it strengthened us as a family, they handled it all and we are all stronger for it.

*Participant 8*. My mom worked and liked it, and I don't think we suffered as kids and I think it gives a really good message to children about women. It will show them that it pulls away from the whole idea that men are dominant and supposed to be the ones to put the food on the table and the women are supposed to stay home and raise the kids and clean the house. It shows that women are strong. It's more balanced to see it that way, so I think I want to work like my mom did to give that message to my kids. It will show my kids that I am strong and can handle a family and work just like their dad does.

*Participant 27*. My mom always worked when we were little and still does. I think she was happy working, at least she looked like she was. I think her mom worked too so she sort of just did it too. She's a teacher and I think she loves it. I think it's okay to work and have a family and all that if, as long as you are happy doing it. I think some women feel guilty and I don't think that's right either.

Participants who reported their mothers worked and their perception was that their mother was unhappy with working, appear to not want to work while raising a family. Comments were as follows:

*Participant 18*. My mom has always worked a couple of days a week when I was growing up and it was really hard for her to leave us. She has often told us she wanted to stay home. She never seemed really happy on the days she worked. I don't want to do that to my kids. I just don't think you should have to feel that way as a mom.

*Participant 31*. My dad was sick a lot when we were small and so my mom had to work. It was hard on her, she was tired a lot and she and my dad fought a lot about money and stuff like that. She says she wishes she could stay at home, but doesn't

feel she can. I think it's hard not only on us, because she never wants to do anything, but it's been hard on their marriage too. I think it's important for women to be able to stay home if they want, and that would be my first choice.

*Theme 3: Education and a Career Are Viewed as Separate Entities*

The idea of education not necessarily leading to a career, but as being good for its own sake and for helping with family life was a strong theme. This theme was endorsed by those who were not planning on a career while raising a family as well as by the three participants that anticipated having a career at the same time as a family. Many participants reported not necessarily choosing a major with a specific career in mind, but more to help them become well-rounded and as contributing to their ability to deal with the rigors of family life. The following quotes support this idea:

*Participant 7.* I don't think education and career are even the same thing. I am not really looking for a career right now, I am just trying to find a major that will give me a good all around education, mainly because I don't want a career, I don't want to get up and go to work every day, I want to be home with my family. As soon as I'm done with school I want to have a family, so the idea of a career is just sort of abstract for me.

*Participant 8.* I think I definitely want to get an education for the opportunity of a career that will provide an income for my family if necessary later on, but mainly I want an education so that the things I learn can apply to just staying at home with my kids. I guess I want to be well rounded and be able to help my kids.

*Participant 28.* I feel like the more knowledge you gain the more useful you are as a mother and a wife. My mother she didn't really major in anything that maybe would

be useful in the work field, but I feel that she got such a good foundation that it has been so beneficial to us as her children so that's really important to me. I just want to choose a major that will broaden my mind to help my family.

*Participant 13.* I am grateful that I have the opportunity now as a woman to get an education whereas before, like years ago, back in the day, you couldn't and I think that part is important, but I definitely lean on the side of my traditional culture in that I don't really care if I use that knowledge in the workforce. I would rather use it in the home if possible.

*Participant 16.* I'm not anxious to go out and 'do' in the workforce. I think I really would enjoy it and I think it would be neat to do it at one point, but my number one goal is just to be able to use what I learn to raise a family and I want that degree because I want to be educated, but that's not my priority to go out to work.

*Participant 18*. Sometimes I used to think what's the point of getting an education if I am just going to stay home like I want to and not actually go out to work, but I guess it's good to help kids with homework and have an intelligent conversation with their dad too.

*Theme 4: Participants Reported Experiencing Both Guilt and Ambivalence Over Wanting Both a Career and a Family*

Wanting both a family and a career, and feeling some confusion, ambivalence, and even guilt around this idea was also a theme among participants. While most believed that their ideas followed those of their peers and society as a whole, many still questioned whether what they were feeling was right. Some participants appeared to feel that wanting a career in and of itself was seen as negative by significant others in their life such as their

peers, parents, or church communities. Others experienced ambivalence on the other end of the spectrum, feeling like wanting to stay home was not acceptable.

These ideas are supported by such quotes as:

*Participant 10.* I think I don't know what I think about having a career. I think my friends and I feel a lot of pressure to put the priority on children and being a home mom, you know by our parents and maybe even by each other, but sometimes in the outside, in the world view, you hear that you should go out and work and maybe make something of yourself. Stand out as a woman so to speak, and it's kind of giving conflicting things about roles.

*Participant 12.* I sometimes feel that I really want to have a job, especially if I go to law school, and spend all that time on my career, but then I wonder if I will feel guilty leaving my kids at home. I think I will. I guess some of it will depend on what my husband thinks as well as what I think.

*Participant 31.* I feel that I am given contradictory messages by my family and culture, get an education regardless of what else you do, but stay at home with your kids, because that's what's most important. I want to be a judge one day, and I want to have a family and so I am sometimes not sure which message to believe. I can't see myself being able to do both well. I guess I believe that one will always be at the expense of the other. So how do you choose? I don't know yet.

*Participant 6.* I think society says you should work and have a family, especially if you want good things in your life, you always here about how it takes two incomes to raise a family these days, but I am not sure that's really true. I think sometimes it is

but I don't really want to work, but I think I might have to, to get my kids what they

need, I don't know.

*Participant 32 .* I really want to work, and I am planning on doing both, you know, a

family as well, but I feel bad because my sisters both stay at home and they think me

wanting to be an engineer is really bad, because when I get married I should stay

home. I worry too that my husband won't want me to work, and how will I handle

that. I find it easier to just not talk about it with them for now.

*Participant 3.* I have always thought that I would like to go into corporate law, like

my dad, but I worry that if I do that and then take several years away from that to

raise a family, that I will not be viable in the work force when I go back and will have

to go back to school to catch up on all that I miss. I think even if you try to stay in

touch with your career by reading and other things, it's never the same as if you are

actually working in it, so I would be behind. I think it's easier to just get a good

education for now and maybe worry about law school later on.

*Theme 5: Participants Saw Career and Motherhood as Mutually Exclusive*

Responses from participants indicated that many of them see having a career and

raising a family as mutually exclusive, especially in terms of being happy or satisfied in both

areas. While they endorse the idea that both are important they do not see them as being

carried on at the same time, but rather as one then the other, or one or the other. Participants

made the following comments about this:

*Participant 16.* Well, my ideal picture is that I go finish my masters in speech

pathology maybe, and I maybe do it for a while until I have my first kid and I stay at

home until they are grown up and then when they are gone I go back to work. That's kind of how I see it right now anyway.

*Participant 20.* I want to have a family one day, but the important thing that I have learned is that you have to do what makes you happy. I want to have a major where I am going to have time to have a family, but I have realized that it is going to be very difficult for me because I want to be an electrical engineer, so I thought that if I choose that it will make me happy, and so I will have to just plan on stopping work for a while and stay home with my kids and then go back, because I just can't see myself doing both.

*Participant 24.* What I personally want to do is have a career and get that established before I start raising children, because I think you have to do that to be good at what you do. Then when I have children I want to stay home with them and maybe later when they grow up have a part time job.

*Participant 25.* Money is a big factor. I think it's important for women to have a career. If it's possible for me to stay home with my kids that's what I want, but I still think a career is important, just not while I'm raising my kids, they are more important. I want to start with a career, have a family and then probably go back to a career, or to work.

*Participant 32.* I think not working is important because it's all to do with time. I think when you work you can't make enough time for both, and kids need more time and attention than work, or at least they should. So, I think it's best to stay home and give your kids your time, which is most valuable and then go back to work if you

want later, when you can give that more time. It's about time and focus really, and I think you can't do both well, which is what I want to do.

*Theme 6: Participants thought of Their Ideas as Being Mainstream whether They Wanted to Work or Stay at Home While Raising a Family*

When asked about how they thought their views fit in with their peers and with society as a whole, the emergent theme was that participants believe their ideas fit in well with their peers and with mainstream society. This was true no matter which side of the discussion they favored. Those who believed that staying home was important seemed to think that their idea fit in with how mainstream society sees the issue. Those who wanted to work at the same time as having a family, interpreted the predominant message received from society as a whole and from their peers as being in line with their thinking. Comments were made supporting both arguments, such as:

*Participant 21.* I think the way I think fits right in with the people I hang out with. I think we all think the same about women staying home with their kids. I'm not 100% sure, but I'm pretty sure that fits in with what society thinks too. I think most women really want to stay home, don't you?

*Participant 24.* If you look at what society says you find that most women should stay home while their kids are young. You always hear on the news and stuff, new reports about how kids are affected by working moms. I think all my friends think the same way. As least that's how they talk.

*Participant 15.* In our class I believe we learned that most women work at some point, but I think they only do it because they have to. Maybe some because they want to, but most probably don't. Maybe they feel pressure to work, which I think is

sad, they should stay home if they want and not feel like they have to work. So society might say they have to work, and that's the only reason they do it. I hope I don't have to.

*Participant 19.* I want to work most of my adult life, but mostly just part-time. Of course I will take a few months, maybe even a year off when my kids are born, but mostly I will work, and I think most of the women I know want to do that. I think most women in general want to do that. I think I'm pretty normal in that regard."

*Participant 11.* All of the girls I know plan on having a career, and probably doing it while they have a family, if not full time, then at least part time. I think in today's economy most people agree that it really has to be that way, and probably want it that way anyway.

*Participant 18*. Working women are more the norm these days, and I believe women like it that way. They have more opportunities nowadays and husbands are expected to do more at home so that their wives can work. I expect my husband to pull his weight when we are both working and having kids, because that's what my father's generation has had to learn to do

Another interesting finding in the interview process was the fact that participants appeared more comfortable in talking about the topic after they thought the official interview was over. In most cases they appeared more relaxed and open when their responses were not being recorded. Participants were more likely to share personal experiences and anecdotes about their experience with regards to what their mother did in balancing the two, as well as to share more about the confusion they were experiencing in trying to choose a career that would help them balance both motherhood and a career. They

appeared more candid about the frustration they experience in the process. Several participants were interested in the research and how the researcher had chosen this topic. More than half the participants commented that friends and roommates that knew they were being interviewed about this subject wanted to be part of the study and to be interviewed, as they too were interested in the topic. In spite of the fact that the stipend was never openly discussed or mentioned by the researcher other than to hand it to each participant at the conclusion of the interview, many of the participants commented that they would have done the interview for free as they felt it was such an interesting and important topic.

Participants were also very interested as to what other participants had said. They wanted to know what other women were thinking about the topic, and more importantly how they were feeling about it. Most seemed interested in knowing if what they had expressed during the interview fell into line with what their peers were experiencing, or if their ideas were opposite to what the majority were experiencing. They were also interested in the findings of the study. All of the participants asked to be sent results of the study upon completion.

This idea was reinforced when the researcher made call backs, several commented that they wanted to read the final results. During the call-back process many participants expressed that they were surprised at how much the interview had impacted them, in that it made them really start to think about this issue. They supported the theme found in the interviews that there was not enough discussion about the topic. One commented that she was "really mad now that I've talked about this, because I realize how important it is and nobody is talking about it."

Many of the participants contacted to verify the results commented on the fact that they were still working on trying to figure out what they felt about the topic. They reported that they wanted more discussion and information. All six of the themes were endorsed by the participants as being relevant to their own experience.

Discussion

The themes that emerged as a result of the interviews conducted in this study provided some valuable insight into the experiences of this particular population of women. The first theme indicated that the women in the study felt that there was not enough discussion on the subject of balancing motherhood and a career. This was interesting as all of those interviewed were nearing the end of a career exploration class, where most participants seemed to have anticipated or even expected some discussion in this area. The reports from participants varied from no discussion of women's career issues in their class, to discussions which simply reported statistics, and one or two class periods in which the challenge of having a career and balancing it with motherhood was mentioned. The overall response from participants seemed to indicate that the subject was not being adequately addressed and in most cases not even acknowledged in the one place they expected that it should be covered, namely their career class.

Respondents also indicated that there was little discussion with their parents. This was an interesting finding in light of the fact that the majority of women in the study reported their mothers' experience in balancing career and family as the major influence on their current decisions in this area. It appears from the interviews that while women are talking with their parents about which careers they should engage in, they are not having discussions about the challenges in balancing that career with motherhood. This is still the case in spite of the fact that many of them express experiencing confusion about the topic, and frustration with the lack of information they have available to them.

Discussion amongst peers also seems to focus more on which career they should choose as opposed to any talk of finding balance between having a career and being a

homemaker. Most of the women reported rarely having discussed it with their female peers, and never having discussed it with boyfriends or their male peers.

The findings in this study suggested that as there appears to be no discussion on the topic with any of the significant others in their lives, the women involved were somewhat bewildered and confused as to how to go about getting the information they need to adequately prepare for balancing the two roles, which would include selection of a major, or a career emphasis.

Research in this area indicates that while there has been some progress made with respect to understanding women's career issues, there is still little talk of how to resolve the work/family conflict (Weitzman, 1994). More importantly this supports the findings of Peake and Harris (2002), who suggested that even when women expect to have to balance work and family, one of the most significant problems is that they fail to adequately plan for the combination of the two, due to lack of knowledge and/or resources available to help in the decision making process.

The second theme presented the idea that for the women in this study their mother's experience with balancing career and homemaking was the most important factor in determining how they wanted to handle the two in the future. What was most pertinent about this theme, was that is was not how they felt their mother's working outside of the home had impacted them, but more their perception of how it had impacted their mother that was more salient. As mentioned earlier, the actual fact as to whether their mother had a career, whether full time or part-time or whether she was a full time homemaker was not as influential as whether they perceived their mother as being satisfied or dissatisfied with her decision that had the most influence on women in the study.

This aligns with findings from previous studies that indicated the mother's attitudes about career and family had a greater influence on woman's future career choice than whether or not she chose to have a career (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). It also supports Farmer's (1985) idea that parental support for careers has a direct influence on girls' long-term career motivation. Mother's influence on career issues also supports research in social learning theory, and the idea of cultural context as being important as outlined by Struch et al. (2002). They suggested that the cultural context in which the women in the study experienced attitudes about career, namely that of their home and the influence of their mother, would have the greatest impact on their own career decisions

This raises some interesting questions for women and the messages they are sending their daughters about careers and family life. There may be many factors that contribute to their attitudes about work other than those based on the struggle with balancing work and family. For example, it may be that women see the home as a place to discuss openly their feelings about work, or to 'let off steam' so to speak, and consider it a safer environment in which to express their frustrations about careers or work other than the work environment itself. This may also be true of women who choose to stay home. Perhaps they feel safer in discussing frustrations about their choice, but do not necessarily want to change their circumstance. Other factors, such as marital discord or financial pressures may also be influencing their attitudes and may not be directly related to their opinion about careers and homemaking. If this is the case, perhaps their frustration may be misconstrued by others, in particular their daughters, as not liking, or being dissatisfied with the choice they have made with regards to motherhood and careers.

It also raises questions as to how to approach career education in schools, colleges and universities, if the greatest influence is still found within the home environment. Perhaps the greater question we should be asking is, is it even possible, or necessary, to change this paradigm for traditional women?

The third theme that emerged was the idea of education as not necessarily leading to a career, which is closely linked to the fifth theme, seeing a career and motherhood as being mutually exclusive. Many of the women in the study expressed the idea that they had no intention of having a career after they finished college, but were focused more on getting an education in several areas to improve the quality of their family life. So while they see education as an important part of their personal development and growth, they do not see it as necessarily resulting in a career. This may be influenced by the fact that many of the women did not see themselves as having a career while they raise their family, or even afterwards, so investing in an education that will help in family life seems more salient at this point in their lives.

The women who wanted a career tended to be leaning more towards getting a balanced education and returning to school after their children leave home, and focusing on a more general education approach for the time being.

This was the one theme that was expressed the most strongly after the tape recorder was turned off, in the 'unofficial' interviews. Many of the women seemed more comfortable in sharing the fact that they didn't really want a career at all, but still felt that having an education was important. Four of the most common themes were the idea of being in school, 'just until I get married and have kids', being in school to please my parents, being in school to get an education and to set a good example for my future children, and getting an

education because their culture emphasized that it was important, but not necessarily because they believed it was.

The fact that the women were more open to this discussion after the official interview was an important finding. It suggested that the pressure they feel to conform within their own cultural context, following the norms and mores regarding career and family may have a stronger influence than they were first willing to admit. This may also have been influenced by the researcher. It may have been that the participants viewed the researcher as a 'career woman' and at first may have wanted to impress her with their career plans. They may have become more comfortable as the interview progressed, and have felt more open to express what they were really experiencing.

The fourth theme brought to light the ambivalence many of the women experienced surrounding the process of making career and family decisions. In many instances their responses reflected paradoxical ideas. In other words, many of the participants expressed what would appear to be contradictory statements, but that were nonetheless still true. For example, the belief that family and education were equally important in the eyes of their culture and yet wanting to stay home to raise a family because that is what is most important to them, were common themes expressed by these women. The women reported receiving support for both staying home and getting an education from their dominant culture. It would appear that for many of the women, the difference came when the message about education versus career was raised. It seems that while they believe education was as important as having a family, they felt the message about having a career versus raising a family was more unclear. Once again individual decisions seemed based more in what their mother's

experience was, but yet that often did not agree with messages they felt they were receiving from their culture and society as a whole.

There also seemed to be feelings of guilt on both ends of the spectrum associated with figuring out how to balance family and careers. While some of the women felt they wanted a career, they were unsure as to how that would be viewed in their culture, and were hesitant in voicing too loudly the idea that a career was important to them. This was also true for women who felt that staying home was more important to them. They often felt like voicing that to their peers may not be acceptable. This supports research by Jackson and Scharman (2002), which purported that women's career choice cannot help but be influenced by socially acceptable views of women as both workers and mothers in any given cultural context. For the women in this study, the social mores they subscribed to were often in conflict with what they felt they believed and wanted for themselves. This too appears as somewhat of a paradox, as the women also reported that they thought the way they felt generally fell in line with what others felt.

The idea of a having a career and wanting a family as being mutually exclusive was the main tenet of the fifth theme. This was another area where as much information could have been gleaned from the post-interview talk as from the actual interviews. Again mainly in the form of reaffirming the theme found in the interviews. Participants reported feeling that the two were not compatible and that it was more of an either or situation. Many expressed wanting to have a career, and the ideas seemed to fall into three categories: (a) those who want to establish themselves in a career and then have children; (b) those who want to have children and then perhaps become involved in a career; and (c) those who do not anticipate ever being actively engaged in the workforce, but do see themselves as having

a family. There were only two women in the sample who saw themselves as having a career at the same time as raising a family, one who anticipated full time employment, and the other anticipating part time work while raising children. Women in the study seemed to suggest that they would have difficulty in doing both, as one would always suffer at the expense of the other.

These findings both support and contradict the current research. According to McCracken and Weizman (1997), and Peake and Harris (2002), the majority of women anticipate being actively engaged in the workforce, and as also being involved in family roles. Furthermore they see themselves as blending the two areas as opposed to having to make sacrifices in either area. Hartung and Rogers (2000) suggested that both high school girls and female university students see themselves as equally committed to having a career and raising a family. This does not hold true for this sample, where the majority supported the research of Raabe (1996), who suggested that women tend to dichotomize the work-family dilemma and see themselves as ether a full time worker, or a full time homemaker.

The sixth theme supports the social learning theory research as well as research by Lott (1997), in that most of the women in this study believed that their own experience and views, were those held by the majority. It fits with Lott's idea that the gender beliefs we hold are learned early in life and reinforced by social consensus. Respondents in the study felt that their beliefs were the same as their peers, and their family, the most dominant social groups with whom they interact. This was true both for those who felt career was important and who wanted a career whether during or after child-raising years, or those who were not interested in having a career at any point. The influence of the larger society, in such arenas as the media, seemed to have a lesser impact than those immediately surrounding them. This was

evidenced by the fact that while some of the women made references to how they believed society as a whole regarded women's career issues, the statements supporting their own decisions were prefaced or followed by such remarks, as 'most of the women I know', or 'all my friends,' or 'my sisters,' suggesting that those with whom they have the closest interaction have more of an impact on their actual decisions.

Another interesting finding was that none of the 32 participants seemed to take into consideration the fact that their child-bearing and child-raising years would only take up a portion of their adult lives. There seemed to be little being considered in the way of career planning for after their children had left home. There was the occasional mention of possibly starting a career later in life, but there did not seem to be an indication that this would play an important role in their life. This may in part be due to the fact that for the majority of the respondents, their own parents are still in the child-raising years, and so they have little to no experience or frame of reference for this stage of life. This lack of forethought or interest in this stage of life appears somewhat disconcerting, as for the majority of adults the years after child-raising can play an important role in preparation for retirement and should be considered in planning a future career.

Some of the findings in this study, while not actual themes, were of great interest and importance. The first finding was the interest that the study generated from participants. This was indicated by the number of respondents. The fact that 37 of the original 39 women contacted (95%) were willing to be interviewed suggested that the topic may be one of interest to this population. Also indicative of the level of interest was the fact that 26 women, not originally contacted by the researcher, but who had heard about the interview through roommates and friends also wanted to be included in the study. This may of course have been

due in part to the $20.00 stipend that was offered to participants who completed an interview, and it is difficult to say how much of an influence that had on the response rate. However, the fact that 12 of the women interviewed, reported to the researcher without prompting, that they would have done the interview if there had been no stipend suggested that the stipend was not the only factor in motivating women to participate. This was supported further by the fact that 9 of the 26 women not originally contacted reported that they would not require the stipend, but still wanted to be interviewed.

The second finding that was perhaps more unexpected, again while not necessarily a theme, was the fact that women were more comfortable in discussing the subject after they thought the tape had stopped and the official interview was over. Most of the women interviewed continued talking after the taping had stopped. This was noteworthy in that the final question posed by the researcher in the interview asked each participant if they had any questions or any more comments they wished to make on the subject, and after one or two final comments each respondent replied that they were done. It was surprising then, when after the tape was stopped, so many of the women voluntarily continued talking. Many asked if the tape was off before making further comments

This posed an ethical question for the researcher, as much of the information shared at this juncture seemed to be addressing what the women were truly feeling and experiencing around this issue, and although the researcher made notes about the comments, the information was not being recorded and therefore the question as to whether or not it could be used as a part of the study came in to play. While the information did not in and of itself have an impact on changing the themes from the interviews, in almost every instance it reinforced and provided stronger support for the themes. The conclusion reached by the

researcher was that the information could be shared in a general sense but that no quotes or literal transcriptions could be used.

The women tended to share many more personal experiences and ideas, and a stronger sense of the dilemma they were facing in trying to balance career and family was evident to the researcher in theses conversations. The content of the after interview discussions focused on wanting to know whether or not other women were struggling with this, how they could find more information about how to successfully balance family and career and wondering why there was no discussion about this. Several respondents indicated feeling frustrated and confused by the messages they were sent from society and even significant others in their lives, which while this came out in the themes in the interviews themselves, it was often said with more strength and emotion when they thought their answers were not being recorded. This was supported in the follow-up calls made to verify the themes with the participants. When the researcher pointed out that many women continued talking after the recording stopped, several of the participants commented that they would have expected this, as they themselves felt more at ease when not being recorded. This suggested that it may in part have been just the interview process itself and not necessarily the content that was responsible for more restricted answers while being recorded. However the frequency with which this occurred in this instance, suggested that this was not the only reason. The very fact that the participants did not want this to be a part of the official interview seems to reinforce the idea found in the literature that women are struggling with making sense out of how to balance career and family and are still experiencing confusion around this issue (Brown, 2002).

Overall it seemed that while many of the findings found in this study support research on women as a whole regarding balancing a career and a family, the more salient issue for traditional women goes one step further. For these women the issue not only includes the struggle to find ways to balance the two but also includes a struggle with knowing whether or not they even want to have both, or perhaps whether or not their culture supports their desire for both. Navigating the path between culture, family and personal beliefs seems to be complicated for traditional women.

*Limitations of the Study*

The researchers acknowledge that this study had limitations. The sample was selected from a fairly specific source, using methods of convenience. This was in part due to the nature of the study, in that the researcher was interested in traditional college women. The definition of a traditional college woman was determined by the researcher and then acknowledged by the counseling center directors as being applicable to female students at their college. The participants then identified themselves as fitting with the researcher's definition of traditional from the initial contact letter given to them in their career class. This self-selection process may have biased the sample. The sample is probably biased towards women who already have either a career focus, or were struggling with the decision as they were all selected from career and life planning classes. The sample may also be biased towards the experience of middle-class European American women. Any findings are limited to this group of women and not generalizeable to other groups. However, the repetition and redundancy found across the interviews coupled with the agreement between the researcher and the auditor regarding the themes suggested that the findings are valid.

The study may have benefited from including traditional women across all stages of their college experience to determine if the themes ring true at every stage. It may also have been useful to include traditional men from the same population as the influence they may have on their female peers could be of significance. However, this study was only an initial attempt to understand the viewpoint and experience of traditional college freshman, and could serve as a springboard for further research. The very nature of qualitative research is that it is never finished, and therefore further research in the area will definitely add to the findings of this study.

*Suggestions for Further Research*

Future research may look at the experience of traditional women who have already chosen a career, and who are actually in the process of balancing family and careers to see if their experience poses similar difficulties for this population. It may also be of use to include males from this population across the various life stages as their input could not help but influence the female population, as they are involved with both family and careers from a male perspective. Research on the same age group but using women who are not identified as having a traditional life approach may be useful to contrast the two populations. This may lead to further knowledge as to whether the findings of the study are particularly salient for traditional women or for women in general, as suggested by past research.

Research could also be undertaken which looked at the impact of the power differential in the workforce as suggested by Mather-Saul (2003), Lips (1993), and Lipman-Blumen (1984). It may be that women from more traditional backgrounds are more susceptible to feeling the power differential between men and women, which may be carried over in their views and opinions about career and family.

As was the case with much of the early work done on career issues, this study focused primarily on the experience of traditional, middle-class, European-American women (Osipow, 1973; F. Parsons, 1909; Tyler, 1978). The experience may be different for traditional women from other cultures, where perhaps the cultural mores and values, while still falling under the umbrella of traditional are different surrounding work and family. This may also be true for women from lower socio-economic backgrounds. While they may still have the same fundamental belief that motherhood is their primary role, they may not have the option of not working. Studies looking at their perspective may provide added information on the conflict women experience between the two roles.

*Implications of the Study*

Implications of this research are evident in many areas. The first of these focuses on the future direction of career counseling for traditional women. For example, the first theme appears to focus on the lack of knowledge and discussion traditional women are experiencing in every area, but particularly in their career classes. More attention could be given to discussion about not only the statistics of women in the work force but open discussion about the challenges they are facing in being work-force participants and still bearing the majority of the burden for child care. Finding ways to help traditional women explore their own ideas and perhaps look at more family friendly career options may also be a useful exercise to include in discussions about careers.

The issue goes beyond merely providing forums for discussion in classrooms, but begins at the institutional level. It may be that women college students in institutions with a more traditional focus do not feel comfortable, or perhaps even able to discuss feelings centered on balancing career and family. The institutional climate itself may be intimidating

to the point of preventing discussion on the topic. This could mean that institutions need to find ways to open the discussion on this topic, perhaps starting with increased awareness at the faculty level. For example, it may be that the majority of career classes are taught by male faculty, with an approach which, while not intended, may still be focused on the career experience of the European-American, middle class male. Female representation in the faculty may also be an issue to consider. Looking at perceptions of female faculty members by both the faculty as a whole, the administration and the student body may provide further insight into both the lack of discussion and new vehicles for opening the discussion.

College counseling centers may also be in a position to benefit traditional women, who seem to be looking for ways and perhaps even permission to talk about career and family issues. This could be done by first acknowledging that there is not enough discussion, but also by providing forums and means by which traditional women could start to explore their concerns regarding balancing family and careers. This may encourage discussion on a more informal level between peers, as well as perhaps between students and their parents. Acquainting center personnel with the challenges this particular population are experiencing may be useful on an individual counseling level, to help give these women another avenue for exploring their own feelings on this topic in a safe environment.

There are also implications for parents. The knowledge that their mother is the main influence for these women with regards to career decisions, should encourage parents to begin having open and honest discussion with their children, but more particularly their daughters about not only their own experience, but about the mores and social norms that exist in their dominant culture surrounding careers and family.

Implications also exist for employers. The idea of helping not only traditional women but traditional couples find ways to balance family and careers in a more flexible way as suggested by Jackson and Scharman (2002), may lead to helping clear up some of the ambivalence and confusion these women experience around the subject.

Finally, results from this study indicate that a more global change in the paradigm through which we view the career/family debate is needed. The terminology typically used, such as 'balancing' family and career, suggests the existence of a competitive element between the two and the idea that one area will invariably suffer if more attention is given to the other. Research by Friedman, Christensen and DeGroot (1998) suggested that success at work often leads to success in one's family and vice versa. Perhaps we could eliminate the dichotomy between work and family and support the research by Friedman et al., by using terminology such as 'harmonizing work and family'. Changing this paradigm shift could lead to helping women navigate the two worlds more successfully, particularly women from more traditional backgrounds.

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APPENDIX A

Letter to Participants

Dear Student,

My name is Lisa Leavitt, and I am a doctoral student at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. As part of my research I am exploring the experiences of women college students. I am particularly interested in female students perspectives on trying to integrate work and family expectations in the future.

I am looking for female, freshman students who are willing to be interviewed on this topic. I am focusing on women who see themselves as being from a more traditional background and whose central value system, and cultural mores emphasize homemaking and childrearing as their primary role. I anticipate the interviews will last approximately 30-45 minutes. I am offering a $20.00 stipend to all students who participate, to show my appreciation for taking the time to help with this research.

I will be at Concordia College on Friday, March 26, 2004, and I will be scheduling interviews between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm, in the counseling center on campus. If you are interested in participating, and consider yourself as being from a more traditional background, please contact me as soon as possible in one of the following ways:

1) By email at LMLeavitt@aol.com. Please use the term "research project" in the subject line. Please include the times you are available on that day, your e-mail address, and a telephone number so that I can contact you to set up an interview.
2) You can also call me collect at (801) 371-0240 in the evenings.

Thank you so much for considering this offer.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Leavitt M.S.

PS. If you have freshman roommates or friends who are interested, but not in your class, they are also welcome to contact me for an interview time.

APPENDIX B

Consent Form And Demographic Form

# Consent to Participate in Research

I am exploring the experiences of women college students. I am particularly interested in students perspectives on trying to integrate work and family expectations. I would like to interview you for approximately 30-45 minutes to get your perspectives on work-family issues. Once I have made my initial analysis of the interviews, I will contact you again to get your perspective on my preliminary results. I anticipate this follow-up interview will take less than 15 minutes. Your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous in the analysis and in any reports of my findings. I do not anticipate any risks or benefits to you for participating in this research. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in a research project, you may contact Lisa M. Leavitt, Counseling Psychology, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, phone 801-422-8031; or Aaron P. Jackson, Assistant Professor, Counseling Psychology, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, phone 801-422-8031; or Dr. Shane S. Schulthies, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, 120B RB, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602; phone, 801-422-5490.

Signed_____        Date_____

## Demographic Information

Name_____

College or University_____

Gender_____                    Ethnicity_____

Age (year and month)_____

APPENDIX C

Journal Manuscript

FACING THE CAREER/FAMILY DICHOTOMY: TRADITIONAL COLLEGE

WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE

by

Lisa M. Leavitt

Brigham Young University

May, 2005

Introduction

Over the last 60 years, both work life and family life have been greatly impacted by the changing role of women in the workplace. Current trends indicate that most women either expect to be, or are active participants in the work force and engage in both paid work and primary parenting responsibilities (McCracken & Weitzman, 1997). However, a variety of cultural factors have contributed to the polarization of these work and family roles. That is, cultural definitions of what it means to be a homemaker or to have a career have made these roles seem mutually exclusive (Raabe, 1996). This polarization has led to some role confusion for women. Some research suggested that many women dichotomize the work-family dilemma and can only see themselves as either a full-time homemaker, or a full-time career person, despite the fact that most working women continue to perform the bulk of the duties defined as full-time homemaking (Jackson & Scharman, 2002). This dichotomy may be particularly salient for women from more traditional backgrounds whose central value system, and cultural mores emphasize homemaking and childrearing as their primary role—especially if they pursue a college education (Machung, 1989).

*Purpose of the Study*

It may be that traditional young women entering college find themselves in a setting where the primary focus and cultural expectation is centered on preparing for a career. Women from traditional backgrounds, although enrolled in college, may also be expected to begin turning their attention to marriage and full-time parenting. However, the very act of being in college suggests the question of career development. While education may be seen as valuable for its own sake, it is typically associated with the idea of preparing for a career outside of the home. The conflicting pressures to get married and become a full-time parent,

and choose and establish a career seem to create a particularly poignant dilemma for traditional women in college. To date, no research has explored the experiences of traditional women facing these issues. The purpose of this study is to explicate the experience and perspectives of traditional women college students as they engage the intersection of these seemingly contradictory pressures of becoming a full-time homemaker and having a career.

*The Impact of Historical Perspectives on Women's Career Theories*

Historically, theoretical attempts to address women's career issues have been limited and inconsistent. Fitzgerald, Fassinger, and Betz (1995) suggested that the majority of early work and career theories ignored women's career issues altogether. This neglect was based in a bias that focused primarily on the career development of European American men because they dominated the mainstream work force and research focus. Early work on career issues was said to have begun with Frank Parsons who took the "matching men and jobs" (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 3) approach to career decision making, as outlined in his 1909 book, *Choosing a Vocation* (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Since that time the field of vocational psychology has made considerable progress in both the theory and practice of career development. However, while career theorists have focused on various aspects of career choice and development, the bulk of this work has continued to center on men's experiences (Osipow, 1983).

This trend continued through the era of the industrial revolution, which along with the human resource pressures of World War II brought many more women into the work force. The scholarly trend was to expand on existing male dominated theories to include women's issues, in the hope that they would be sufficient for the description of women's vocational behavior (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Jackson & Scharman, 2002,). However, the existing

theories were still closely linked to cultural perspectives of women long held by society, and were dominated by themes of "gender subordination, sex segregation and gender specific socialization" (Barnett & Hyde, 2001, p. 783).

Significant developments in theories about women's career issues did not come about until the early 1970's, when Osipow (1975) conducted a seminar on women's career issues, and was the first to outline a comprehensive treatment of the career development and vocational psychology of women, much of which forms the basis of our current views on women's career issues (Fitzgerald & Harmon, 2001).

Osipow suggested the existence of barriers to women's career development such as social factors, gender stereotyping, and parental influence (Osipow, 1975). Osipow's work also drew attention to women's' increasingly visible economic contributions and helped to debunk the myth that women had no real vocational interests (Fitzgerald & Harmon, 2001).

By the early 1980's other theorists such as Gottfredson (1981) followed Osipow's lead and began to look at women's career challenges as being separate from men's. Gottfredson postulated that occupational sex type was the most durable factor to influence both men and women in limiting their consideration of careers (Betz, Heesacker & Shuttleworth, 1990). Although theorists were now seeing the need for women to be included in career issues, career options for women were, for the most part, still limited to a narrow range.

As outlined by both Gottfredson and Osipow, the lack of attention given to women's career issues originated from a variety of sources, namely social factors, values and role expectations, gender/sex stereotyping, and parental influence, each of which had a particular effect on women's career development.

Eagly (1994) suggested that our gender-related behavior is shaped by our social roles, and that behavior will be "constrained by its social context and, in particular, by men's more dominant social position". Hartung (1998) suggested that cultural values, particularly social relationship values, play an important role in the career development process, as values develop so that we as individuals can meet our needs in socially acceptable ways. Since the early 1900's societal norms and values originating from 19th century English upper middle class society suggested that women didn't "work" since their "place" was in the home (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). The only roles for adult women sanctioned by society were those of wife and mother. Those not married and engaged in mothering activities were often shunned socially and more importantly were economically deprived, as those occupations that might provide a decent livelihood were considered not within the scope of women's work (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).This perspective was perpetuated up until the 1940's and 50's when the traditional family model of the stay-at-home wife and the working father was still very much a part of both the American culture and the career development theorists (Reskin & Padavic, 1994).

At the time that Osipow published *Emerging Woman: Career Analysis and Outcomes* in 1975, less than 40% of all women were employed outside of the home, which suggested that the idea that women's primary role was that of wife and mother was still upheld by society (Fitzgerald & Harmon, 2001). Over the last 30 years social roles regarding women's career issues have been changing, albeit gradually.

Gender stereotyping has also contributed to the lack of interest in women's career development. Beliefs about gender qualify as stereotypes, are learned early in life, and are difficult to change because they are subscribed to widely, and reinforced by social consensus

(Lott, 1997). Beginning with Freud in the early 1900's, and continuing with T. Parsons in the 1940's and 50's and Erikson in the late 1960's, theorists adhered to a strict belief in gender differences, seeing men and women as more dissimilar than similar with regards to career aspirations (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

In his book *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* published in 1905, Freud indicated that the early years are critical for later personality development, and that the experience is vastly different for boys and girls. The major focus for boys is to achieve a healthy sense of himself as a whole, to form a loving relationship with his wife, and to become a competent, viable person in the world of work. On the other hand he saw the task of identity development for girls as being incomplete without the fulfillment of marriage and child bearing (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Erikson, a follower of Freud, expressed a similar idea and believed that women's sense of identify is somehow incomplete without marriage and motherhood (Erikson, 1968).

Recent research challenging gender stereotyping with regards to the world of work and family suggested that for both men and women the roles of parent and partner are ranked equally in prominence, and are higher for both genders than the role of employee (Thoits, 1992). While this may be true, the societal expectation based in gender stereotyping still has an effect on how the work/family roles are played out for men and women. The gender ideology, which in the past has mandated that women are responsible for the domestic family work and men are the providers and engage in paid employment, has repercussions for women currently engaged in the work force (Lott, 1997). Research also indicated that women are responsible for more housework and child care hours per week than are husbands, regardless of employment status and regardless of financial contribution to the household

(Lott, 1997, p. 285). While our greater understanding of gender stereotyping appears to have provided more opportunities for women to enter the workforce, it seems to have done little to address the issue of balancing work and family, which is now perhaps the more salient issue for women.

Parental influences have also impacted women's career choice. Early research in this area by Sorensen and Winters (1975) focused mainly on maternal role models, maternal identification and parent's socioeconomic status. They noted that women whose mothers were employed were more likely to work than were those whose mothers were full time homemakers. They also found that the socioeconomic status of parents played a role in career choice, with respect to women's perception of opportunities realistically available and knowledge of options and that parental identification was related to the types of careers women pursued, in that they were most likely to pursue careers they were familiar with and had seen their parents engage in.

Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) suggested that while parental identification plays a part in the careers women choose, the greater influence may be the attitudes their mothers hold towards work. Farmer (1976, 1980, 1985) supported this view and considered maternal support for women working as an important influence, and found it to have a direct influence on girls' long-term career motivation.

Current trends indicate that most young women expect to be active participants in the work force and engage in both work and family responsibilities (McCracken & Weitzman, 1997). In spite of the fact that progress has been made with respect to understanding career issues for women, little attention has been paid to the most pressing issue for women, that of reconciling work and family responsibilities (Jackson & Scharman, 2002). Weitzman (1994)

purported that while women's career goals have been aligning themselves more closely with those of their male counterparts, women's desire to be involved in family roles has not diminished. While the family-career balancing act is also pertinent to men, research suggested that the majority of responsibility for doing so lies with women (Fassinger, 1990). Valdez and Gutek (1987) held that the interdependence of work and family life is more problematic for women than men because of the greater demands of family responsibilities. By the same token, women's roles in the work place are more vulnerable to family demands than are men's work roles (Pleck, 1984).

There is compelling research that outlines the conflict most women experience in trying to juggle employment and family responsibilities (Crosby, 1987; Hartung and Rogers, 2000; Kaltreider, 1997; Moen, Chesley, & Shore, 1998; Sanders, M. L. Lengnick-Hall, C. A. Lengnick-Hall, & Steele-Clapp, 1998). According to Peake and Harris (2002) the difficulty lies not in women desiring a multiple role, balanced lifestyle, but is due more to "an overriding confusion about how to go about interfacing the two roles"(p. 406).

Some research has explored the experiences of women who have pioneered alternatives to the inherent bind of being expected to be a full-time employee and a full-time parent. Jackson and Scharman (2002) reported that some women are able to find a meaningful balance between work and family responsibilities by creatively constructing their careers to adapt to their family responsibilities. However, these women reported that they only came to these ideal situations by bucking the prevailing cultural pressures. They also reported that they went through college with the expectation that they had to choose between having a legitimate career and being a full-time homemaker

The dilemma this work-family conflict presents to women is an issue, not only during their working years, but may well impact the career decision-making process for women throughout their development. Brown (2002) suggested that gender is a constraining factor in the career decision-making process for women, as they tend to have a stronger orientation to other life roles, particularly marriage and motherhood. Again, this may be particularly true for women from more traditional backgrounds whose central value system, and cultural mores emphasize homemaking and childrearing as their primary role. This being the case, women from cultures with traditional views of both work and parenting are likely to face additional challenges in making meaningful decisions about these aspects of their lives.

Machung (1989) has suggested that traditional college-age women see career and family as dichotomous, and anticipate career interruption in order to raise a family. Little else has been done to research how they currently go about choosing a career and planning for a family with this in mind.

## Method

A qualitative research methodology was used to conduct the research in this study. Researchers working within this paradigm attempt to understand the meaning that participants give to their experiences from the participants' point of view, and within the context in which those experiences happen (Moon, Dillon, & Sprankle, 1990).

### Participants

Participants for this study were 32 women enrolled as college freshmen at the time of the study. They were selected from three different universities self identified as being associated with philosophies that advocate traditional roles for women as defined earlier. While schools with a more religious philosophy were chosen to target in the site selection

process, the focus of the study was not on religious women, but on women who identified themselves as being traditional in accordance with the researcher's definition. The three institutions used in the study were Brigham Young University, Provo Utah, Concordia College, Moorhead Minnesota, and Gonzaga University, Spokane Washington. The schools were selected by conducting preliminary telephone interviews with counseling and career center directors at each institution to confirm the traditional perspective of the school's culture and that work-family issues are typically salient for women at their institution.

Participants were selected on a volunteer basis from career exploration and life planning classes at each institution. Volunteers were recruited through instructors' announcements in these classes, and were paid $20.00 each for participating in the study. One class from each institution was selected. In all, 39 women were initially contacted through classes at the three institutions. Thirty-seven of the 39 contacted responded indicating that they would like to participate in the study. A further 26 freshman women contacted the researcher indicating an interest in participating and in being interviewed having heard of the project from roommates or friends. In keeping with the proposed study, only those women originally contacted through the classes were interviewed. Due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts, 32 of the 37 who responded were interviewed. The participants ranged in age from 18 years 1 month to nineteen years and seven months, with a mean age of 18 years and 9 months. One of the 32 participants was married, the remainder were single. There were 4 Latina women, 1 African American woman and 27 Caucasian women interviewed. Ten of the participants were from Brigham Young University, 13 were from Concordia College, and 9 were from Gonzaga University. All interviews were done

within the last week of the semester in which participants were taking a career exploration or life planning class.

*Data Collection*

Data were collected using an unstructured interview format. The principal investigator was a doctoral candidate who has training and experience in qualitative methods. All of the interviews were conducted by the principal investigator, in person, and on site at the various institutions. A list of interview topics with guidelines and sample questions was used to help the interviewer avoid leading questions and to maximize the depth and breadth of interviewee responses (Patton, 1990). The interviews ranged from 22 to 51 minutes in length, with an average of 37 minutes. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then interpreted by the researcher using a synthesis of interpretive qualitative methods (Kvale, 1987 1996; Polkinghorne, 1984, 1991). Participants also completed a brief demographic questionnaire and an informed consent form.

The philosophical foundation for the method of the study is based in a relational ontology (Jackson & Patton, 1992; Schwandt, 2000). That is, the fundamental assumption is that relationships are primary and necessary to understanding human experiences.

*Data Analysis*

The interpretation of the transcribed interviews used the same philosophical and theoretical assumptions as were used in conducting the interviews. The post-interview interpretive consisted of several steps. First, the researcher conducted several successive reviews of the transcripts, to identify an initial set of themes. Themes that continued to be supported in successive readings of the transcripts were retained. Themes that did not have broad support in successive readings of the transcripts were removed. Once the researcher

concluded the initial independent analysis, the findings were presented to the auditor for analysis. The auditor selected portions of the analysis to review in order to verify themes and check the methodology of the researcher. Themes were retained only if both the researcher and the auditor come to a consensus about their validity. Presenting the themes to the participants and having them comment on the verity of the themes vis-à-vis their own experience further assessed the validity of the themes. Participant responses to the initial findings were incorporated as the researcher and auditor refined the themes.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Results in the study were obtained following the procedure outlined in the method section. Six general themes emerged from analysis of the interviews.

*Theme 1: The Concept of Balancing Careers and Family Life is Not Being Discussed or Addressed*

When asked how they formed their present opinions about balancing family and career, several participants expressed the idea that little was being discussed in terms of balancing family and careers in any of the areas in their lives, such as with parents, in classes and educational settings, or with their peers. While many of the participants acknowledged that they discussed women's roles, as well as potential careers choices with others, they do not directly address the concept of how to balance the two, or the particular challenges faced in being both a mother and having a career. With regards to their parents, participants made comments such as:

> *Participant 29*. My dad really wants me to work and have a career, and we talk all the
> time about what I should be, and he really pressures me to go into business, but we
> haven't really talked about whether I would keep working or not after kids come

along. My mom has never mentioned it either, even though she works, we just

haven't talked about it. I am not sure what I really even want to know about it, but I

do think about it.

With regards to teachers and other educational settings, comments were made such

as:

*Participant 7*. I am taking a career class right now and it has really helped me focus

on what I want in terms of a major. We talked a bit about women's career issues, but

it was more just about statistics or what percentage work and how it impacts kids. We

haven't really directly addressed the idea of balancing work and family. I guess you

just figure it out on your own, which when I think about kind of frustrates me.

With regards to peers, participants made such comments as:

*Participant 9*. My roommates and I talk a lot about what we want to do, and we even

talk about having families, and our future husbands and things, but we never talk

about how to have both a family and a career. It just never came up, which sitting

talking with you and saying that sounds kind of funny, I mean, why don't we talk

about that if we all plan on doing it, and we know we are and I am sure we all wonder

about it?

*Theme 2: Participants Saw Their Mothers' Influence as the Most Significant in Helping*
*Them Come to Their Present Decision About Career and motherhood*

Another strong theme that emerged was based on the idea that participants were more

likely to base their perceptions of balancing career and family on what they perceived their

mothers' had experienced in this area. This was also endorsed as the greatest influence on

how they felt about family and careers. Some of the comments made by participants that support this were:

> *Participant 19*. Why would you want to go to work and have someone else raise your kids? My mom didn't work and felt it was important to be there for me and my two brothers. I liked having her at home when I got home. She really is the one that has made me think the most about how I want to do it just like her.

> *Participant 4*. My mom was a trained lawyer before she stayed home with us kids. She always talks about one day going back and feeling really challenged and fulfilled. I think it was hard for her to stay home. I think I want to work while I bring up my kids, because I want them to see you can do both and be happy.

*Theme 3: Education and a Career Are Viewed as Separate Entities*

The idea of education not necessarily leading to a career, but as being good for its own sake and for helping with family life was a strong theme. This theme was endorsed by those who were not planning on a career while raising a family as well as by the three participants that anticipated having a career at the same time as a family. Many participants reported not necessarily choosing a major with a specific career in mind, but more to help them become well-rounded and as contributing to their ability to deal with the rigors of family life. The following quote supported this idea:

> *Participant 8*. I think I definitely want to get an education for the opportunity of a career that will provide an income for my family if necessary later on, but mainly I want an education so that the things I learn can apply to just staying at home with my kids. I guess I want to be well rounded and be able to help my kids.

*Theme 4: Participants Reported Experiencing Both Guilt and Ambivalence Over Wanting Both a Career and a Family*

Wanting both a family and a career, and feeling some confusion, ambivalence, and even guilt around this idea was also a theme among participants. While most believed that their ideas followed those of their peers and society as a whole, many still questioned whether what they were feeling was right. Some participants appeared to feel that wanting a career in and of itself was seen as negative by significant others in their life such as their peers, parents, or church communities. Others experienced ambivalence on the other end of the spectrum, feeling like wanting to stay home was not acceptable.

These ideas are supported by such quotes as:

*Participant 31.* I feel that I am given contradictory messages by my family and culture, get an education regardless of what else you do, but stay at home with your kids, because that's what's most important. I want to be a judge one day, and I want to have a family and so I am sometimes not sure which message to believe. I can't see myself being able to do both well. I guess I believe that one will always be at the expense of the other. So how do you choose? I don't know yet.

*Theme 5: Participants Saw Career and Motherhood as Mutually Exclusive*

Responses from participants indicated that many of them see having a career and raising a family as mutually exclusive, especially in terms of being happy or satisfied in both areas. While they endorse the idea that both are important they do not see them as being carried on at the same time, but rather as one then the other, or one or the other. Participants comments such as:

*Participant 32.* I think not working is important because it's all to do with time. I

think when you work you can't make enough time for both, and kids need more time

and attention than work, or at least they should. So, I think it's best to stay home and

give your kids your time, which is most valuable and then go back to work if you

want later, when you can give that more time. It's about time and focus really, and I

think you can't do both well, which is what I want to do.

*Theme 6: Participants thought of Their Ideas as Being Mainstream whether They Wanted to Work or Stay at Home While Raising a Family*

When asked about how they thought their views fit in with their peers and with

society as a whole, the emergent theme was that participants believe their ideas fit in well

with their peers and with mainstream society. This was true no matter which side of the

discussion they favored. Comments were made supporting both arguments, such as:

*Participant 24.* If you look at what society says you find that most women should stay

home while their kids are young. You always hear on the news and stuff, new reports

about how kids are affected by working moms. I think all my friends think the same

way. As least that's how they talk.

*Participant 11.* All of the girls I know plan on having a career, and probably doing it

while they have a family, if not full time, then at least part time. I think in today's

economy most people agree that it really has to be that way, and probably want it that

way anyway.

Another interesting finding in the interview process was the fact that

participants appeared more comfortable in talking about the topic after they thought the

official interview was over. Participants were more likely to share personal experiences and

anecdotes about their experience with regards to what their mother did in balancing the two, as well as to share more about the confusion they were experiencing in trying to choose a career that would help them balance both motherhood and a career. They appeared more candid about the frustration they experience in the process.

During the call-back process all six of the themes were endorsed by the participants. Many participants expressed that they were surprised at how much the interview had impacted them, in that it made them really start to think about this issue. They supported the theme found in the interviews that there was not enough discussion about the topic.

Discussion

The themes that emerged as a result of the interviews conducted in this study provided some valuable insight into the experiences of this particular population of women. The first theme indicated that the women in the study felt that there was not enough discussion on the subject of balancing motherhood and a career. This was interesting as all of those interviewed were nearing the end of a career exploration class, where most participants seemed to have anticipated or even expected some discussion in this area. The overall response from participants seemed to indicate that the subject was not being adequately addressed and in most cases not even acknowledged in the one place they expected that it should be covered, namely their career class.

Respondents also indicated that there was little discussion with their parents. This was an interesting finding in light of the fact that the majority of women in the study reported their mothers' experience in balancing career and family as the major influence on their current decisions in this area. It appears from the interviews that while women are talking

with their parents about which careers they should engage in, they are not having discussions about the challenges in balancing that career with motherhood.

Discussion amongst peers also seems to focus more on which career they should choose as opposed to any talk of finding balance between having a career and being a homemaker. Most of the women reported rarely having discussed it with their female peers, and never having discussed it with boyfriends or their male peers.

The findings in this study suggested that the women involved were somewhat bewildered and confused as to how to go about getting the information they need to adequately prepare for balancing the two roles, which would include selection of a major, or a career emphasis. This supports the findings of Peake and Harris (2002), who suggested that even when women expect to have to balance work and family, one of the most significant problems is that they fail to adequately plan for the combination of the two, due to lack of knowledge and/or resources available to help in the decision making process.

The second theme presented the idea that for the women in this study their mother's experience with balancing career and homemaking was the most important factor in determining how they wanted to handle the two in the future. What was most pertinent about this theme, was that is was not how they felt their mother's working outside of the home had impacted them, but more their perception of how it had impacted their mother that was more salient. This aligns with findings from previous studies that indicated the mother's attitudes about career and family had a greater influence on woman's future career choice than whether or not she chose to have a career (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). It also supports Farmer's (1985) idea that parental support for careers has a direct influence on girls' long-term career motivation. Mother's influence on career issues also supports research in social

learning theory, and the idea of cultural context as being important as outlined by Struch, Schwartz, & van der Kloot, (2002). They suggested that the cultural context in which the women in the study experienced attitudes about career, namely that of their home and the influence of their mother, would have the greatest impact on their own career decisions

This raises some interesting questions for women and the messages they are sending their daughters about careers and family life. There may be many factors that contribute to their attitudes about work other than those based on the struggle with balancing work and family. Perhaps they feel safer in their home environment discussing frustrations about their choice, but do not necessarily want to change their circumstance. Other factors, such as marital discord or financial pressures may also be influencing their attitudes and may not be directly related to their opinion about careers and homemaking.

The third theme that emerged was the idea of education as not necessarily leading to a career. Many of the women in the study expressed the idea that they had no intention of having a career after they finished college, but were focused more on getting an education in several areas to improve the quality of their family life. So while they see education as an important part of their personal development and growth, they do not see it as necessarily resulting in a career. This may be influenced by the fact that many of the women did not see themselves as having a career while they raise their family, or even afterwards, so investing in an education that will help in family life seems more salient at this point in their lives. The women who wanted a career tended to be leaning more towards getting a balanced education and returning to school after their children leave home, and focusing on a more general education approach for the time being.

This was the one theme that was expressed the most strongly after the tape recorder was turned off, in the 'unofficial' interviews. Many of the women seemed more comfortable in sharing the fact that they didn't really want a career at all, but still felt that having an education was important. Four of the most common themes were the idea of being in school, 'just until I get married and have kids', being in school to please my parents, being in school to get an education and to set a good example for my future children, and getting an education because their culture emphasized that it was important, but not necessarily because they believed it was.

The fact that the women were more open to this discussion after the official interview was an important finding. It suggested that the pressure they feel to conform within their own cultural context, following the norms and mores regarding career and family may have a stronger influence than they were first willing to admit. This may also have been influenced by the researcher. It may have been that the participants viewed the researcher as a 'career woman' and at first may have wanted to impress her with their career plans. They may have become more comfortable as the interview progressed, and have felt more open to express what they were really experiencing.

The fourth theme brought to light the ambivalence many of the women experienced surrounding the process of making career and family decisions. In many instances their responses reflected paradoxical ideas. In other words, many of the participants expressed what would appear to be contradictory statements, but that were nonetheless still true. For example, the belief that family and education were equally important in the eyes of their culture and yet wanting to stay home to raise a family because that is what is most important to them, were common themes expressed by these women. The women reported receiving

support for both staying home and getting an education from their dominant culture. It would appear that for many of the women, the difference came when the message about education versus career was raised. It seems that while they believe education was as important as having a family, they felt the message about having a career versus raising a family was more unclear. Once again individual decisions seemed based more in what their mother's experience was, but yet that often did not agree with messages they felt they were receiving from their culture and society as a whole.

There also seemed to be feelings of guilt on both ends of the spectrum associated with figuring out how to balance family and careers. While some of the women felt they wanted a career, they were unsure as to how that would be viewed in their culture, and were hesitant in voicing too loudly the idea that a career was important to them. This was also true for women who felt that staying home was more important to them. They often felt like voicing that to their peers may not be acceptable. This supports research by Jackson & Scharman (2002), which purports that women's career choice cannot help but be influenced by socially acceptable views of women as both workers and mothers in any given cultural context. For the women in this study, the social mores they subscribed to were often in conflict with what they felt they believed and wanted for themselves. This too appears as somewhat of a paradox, as the women also reported that they thought the way they felt generally fell in line with what others felt.

The idea of a having a career and wanting a family as being mutually exclusive was the main tenet of the fifth theme. This was another area where as much information could have been gleaned from the post-interview talk as from the actual interviews. Again mainly in the form of reaffirming the theme found in the interviews. Participants reported feeling

that the two were not compatible and that it was more of an either or situation. Many expressed wanting to have a career, and the ideas seemed to fall into three categories: 1. those who want to establish themselves in a career and then have children; 2. those who want to have children and then perhaps become involved in a career; and 3. those who do not anticipate ever being actively engaged in the workforce, but do see themselves as having a family. There were only two women in the sample who saw themselves as having a career at the same time as raising a family. Women in the study seemed to suggest that they would have difficulty in doing both, as one would always suffer at the expense of the other.

These findings both support and contradict the current research. According to McCracken & Weizman (1997), and Peake & Harris (2002), the majority of women anticipate being actively engaged in the workforce, and as also being involved in family roles. Furthermore they see themselves as blending the two areas as opposed to having to make sacrifices in either area. Hartung & Rogers (2000) suggested that both high school girls and female university students see themselves as equally committed to having a career and raising a family. This does not hold true for this sample, where the majority support the research of Raabe (1996), who suggested that women tend to dichotomize the work-family dilemma and see themselves as ether a full time worker, or a full time homemaker.

The sixth theme supports the social learning theory research as well as research by Lott (1997), in that most of the women in this study believed that their own experience and views, were those held by the majority. It fits with Lott's (1997) idea that the gender beliefs we hold are learned early in life and reinforced by social consensus. Respondents in the study felt that their beliefs were the same as their peers, and their family, the most dominant social groups with whom they interact. This was true both for those who felt career was important

and who wanted a career whether during or after child-raising years, or those who were not interested in having a career at any point. The influence of the larger society, in such arenas as the media, seemed to have a lesser impact than those immediately surrounding them. This was evidenced by the fact that while some of the women made references to how they believed society as a whole regarded women's career issues, the statements supporting their own decisions were prefaced or followed by such remarks, as 'most of the women I know', or 'all my friends,' or 'my sisters,' suggesting that those with whom they have the closest interaction have more of an impact on their actual decisions.

Another interesting finding was that none of the 32 participants seemed to take into consideration the fact that their child-bearing and child-raising years would only take up a portion of their adult lives. There seemed to be little being considered in the way of career planning for after their children had left home. There was the occasional mention of possibly starting a career later in life, but there did not seem to be an indication that this would play an important role in their life. This may in part be due to the fact that for the majority of the respondents, their own parents are still in the child-raising years, and so they have little to no experience or frame of reference for this stage of life. This lack of forethought or interest in this stage of life appears somewhat disconcerting, as for the majority of adults the years after child-raising can play an important role in preparation for retirement and should be considered in planning a future career.

Some of the findings in this study, while not actual themes, were of great interest and importance. The first finding was the interest that the study generated from participants. This was indicated by the number of respondents. The fact that 37 of the original 39 women contacted (95%) were willing to be interviewed suggested that the topic may be one of

interest to this population. Also indicative of the level of interest was the fact that 26 women, not originally contacted by the researcher, but who had heard about the interview through roommates and friends also wanted to be included in the study. This may of course have been due in part to the $20.00 stipend that was offered to participants who completed an interview, and it is difficult to say how much of an influence that had on the response rate. However, the fact that 12 of the women interviewed, reported to the researcher without prompting, that they would have done the interview if there had been no stipend suggested that the stipend was not the only factor in motivating women to participate. This was supported further by the fact that 6 of the 26 women not originally contacted reported that they would not require the stipend, but still wanted to be interviewed.

The second finding that was perhaps more unexpected, again while not necessarily a theme, was the fact that women were more comfortable in discussing the subject after they thought the tape had stopped and the official interview was over. Most of the women interviewed continued talking after the taping had stopped. This was noteworthy in that the final question posed by the researcher in the interview asked each participant if they had any questions or any more comments they wished to make on the subject, and after one or two final comments each respondent replied that they were done. It was surprising then, when after the tape was stopped, so many of the women voluntarily continued talking. Many asked if the tape was off before making further comments

This posed an ethical question for the researcher, as much of the information shared at this juncture seemed to be addressing what the women were truly feeling and experiencing around this issue, and although the researcher made notes about the comments, the information was not being recorded and therefore the question as to whether or not it could

be used as a part of the study came in to play. While the information did not in and of itself have an impact on changing the themes from the interviews, in almost every instance it reinforced and provided stronger support for the themes. The conclusion reached by the researcher was that the information could be shared in a general sense but that no quotes or literal transcriptions could be used.

The women tended to share many more personal experiences and ideas, and a stronger sense of the dilemma they were facing in trying to balance career and family was evident to the researcher in theses conversations. The content of the after interview discussions focused on wanting to know whether or not other women were struggling with this, how they could find more information about how to successfully balance family and career and wondering why there was no discussion about this. Several respondents indicated feeling frustrated and confused by the messages they were sent from society and even significant others in their lives, which while this came out in the themes in the interviews themselves, it was often said with more strength and emotion when they thought their answers were not being recorded. This was supported in the follow-up calls made to verify the themes with the participants. When the researcher pointed out that many women continued talking after the recording stopped, several of the participants commented that they would have expected this, as they themselves felt more at ease when not being recorded. This suggested that it may in part have been just the interview process itself and not necessarily the content that was responsible for more restricted answers while being recorded. However the frequency with which this occurred in this instance, suggested that this was not the only reason. The very fact that the participants did not want this to be a part of the official interview seems to reinforce the idea found in the literature that women are struggling with

making sense out of how to balance career and family and are still experiencing confusion around this issue (Brown, 2002).

Overall it seemed that while many of the findings found in this study support research on women as a whole regarding balancing a career and a family, the more salient issue for traditional women goes one step further. For these women the issue not only includes the struggle to find ways to balance the two but also includes a struggle with knowing whether or not they even want to have both, or perhaps whether or not their culture supports their desire for both. Navigating the path between culture, family and personal beliefs seems to be complicated for traditional women.

*Limitations of the Study*

The researchers acknowledge that this study had limitations. The sample was selected from a fairly specific source, using methods of convenience. This was in part due to the nature of the study, in that the researcher was interested in traditional college women. The definition of a traditional college woman was determined by the researcher and then acknowledged by the counseling center directors as being applicable to female students at their college. The participants then identified themselves as fitting with the researcher's definition of traditional from the initial contact letter given to them in their career class. This self-selection process may have biased the sample. The sample is probably biased towards women who already have either a career focus, or were struggling with the decision as they were all selected from career and life planning classes. The sample may also be biased towards the experience of middle-class European American women. Any findings are limited to this group of women and not generalizeable to other groups. However, the repetition and

redundancy found across the interviews coupled with the agreement between the researcher and the auditor regarding the themes suggested that the findings are valid.

The study may have benefited from including traditional women across all stages of their college experience to determine if the themes ring true at every stage. It may also have been useful to include traditional men from the same population as the influence they may have on their female peers could be of significance. However, this study was only an initial attempt to understand the viewpoint and experience of traditional college freshman, and could serve as a springboard for further research. The very nature of qualitative research is that it is never finished, and therefore further research in the area will definitely add to the findings of this study.

*Suggestions for Further Research*

Future research may look at the experience of traditional women who have already chosen a career, and who are actually in the process of balancing family and careers to see if their experience poses similar difficulties for this population. It may also be of use to include males from this population across the various life stages as their input could not help but influence the female population, as they are involved with both family and careers from a male perspective. Research on the same age group but using women who are not identified as having a traditional life approach may be useful to contrast the two populations. This may lead to further knowledge as to whether the findings of the study are particularly salient for traditional women or for women in general, as suggested by past research.

Research could also be undertaken which looked at the impact of the power differential in the workforce as suggested by Mather-Saul (2003),Lips (1993), and Lipman-Blumen (1984). It may be that women from more traditional backgrounds are more

susceptible to feeling the power differential between men and women, which may be carried over in their views and opinions about career and family.

As was the case with much of the early work done on career issues, this study focused primarily on the experience of traditional, middle-class, European-American women (Osipow, 1973; F. Parsons, 1909; Tyler, 1978;). The experience may be different for traditional women from other cultures, where perhaps the cultural mores and values, while still falling under the umbrella of traditional are different surrounding work and family. This may also be true for women from lower socio-economic backgrounds. While they may still have the same fundamental belief that motherhood is their primary role, they may not have the option of not working. Studies looking at their perspective may provide added information on the conflict women experience between the two roles.

*Implications of the Study*

Implications of this research are evident in many areas. The first of these focuses on the future direction of career counseling for traditional women. For example, the first theme appears to focus on the lack of knowledge and discussion traditional women are experiencing in every area, but particularly in their career classes. More attention could be given to discussion about not only the statistics of women in the work force but open discussion about the challenges they are facing in being work-force participants and still bearing the majority of the burden for child care. Finding ways to help traditional women explore their own ideas and perhaps look at more family friendly career options may also be a useful exercise to include in discussions about careers.

The issue goes beyond merely providing forums for discussion in classrooms, but begins at the institutional level. It may be that women college students in institutions with a

more traditional focus do not feel comfortable, or perhaps even able to discuss feelings centered on balancing career and family. The institutional climate itself may be intimidating to the point of preventing discussion on the topic. This could mean that institutions need to find ways to open the discussion on this topic, perhaps starting with increased awareness at the faculty level. For example, it may be that the majority of career classes are taught by male faculty, with an approach which, while not intended, may still be focused on the career experience of the European-American, middle class male. Female representation in the faculty may also be an issue to consider. Looking at perceptions of female faculty members by both the faculty as a whole, the administration and the student body may provide further insight into both the lack of discussion and new vehicles for opening the discussion.

College counseling centers may also be in a position to benefit traditional women, who seem to be looking for ways and perhaps even permission to talk about career and family issues. This could be done by first acknowledging that there is not enough discussion, but also by providing forums and means by which traditional women could start to explore their concerns regarding balancing family and careers. This may encourage discussion on a more informal level between peers, as well as perhaps between students and their parents. Acquainting center personnel with the challenges this particular population are experiencing may be useful on an individual counseling level, to help give these women another avenue for exploring their own feelings on this topic in a safe environment.

There are also implications for parents. The knowledge that their mother is the main influence for these women with regards to career decisions, should encourage parents to begin having open and honest discussion with their children, but more particularly their

daughters about not only their own experience, but about the mores and social norms that exist in their dominant culture surrounding careers and family.

Implications also exist for employers. The idea of helping not only traditional women but traditional couples find ways to balance family and careers in a more flexible way as suggested by Jackson and Scharman (2002), may lead to helping clear up some of the ambivalence and confusion these women experience around the subject.

Finally, results from this study indicate that a more global change in the paradigm through which we view the career/family debate is needed. The terminology typically used, such as 'balancing' family and career, suggests the existence of a competitive element between the two and the idea that one area will invariably suffer if more attention is given to the other. Research by Friedman, Christensen and DeGroot (1998) suggests that success at work often leads to success in one's family and vice versa. Perhaps we could eliminate the dichotomy between work and family and support the research by Friedman et al., by using terminology such as 'harmonizing work and family'. Changing this paradigm shift could lead to helping women navigate the two worlds more successfully, particularly women from more traditional backgrounds.

<div align="center">References</div>

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