

2017

"Supermom" and "Super-Maman": The Transition to New Motherhood in American and French Mothers

Abigail F. Daum
Scripps College

Recommended Citation

Daum, Abigail F., "'Supermom' and 'Super-Maman': The Transition to New Motherhood in American and French Mothers" (2017).
Scripps Senior Theses. 969.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/969

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Scripps Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scripps Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

**“SUPERMOM” AND “SUPER-MAMAN”: THE TRANSITION TO NEW
MOTHERHOOD IN AMERICAN AND FRENCH MOTHERS**

by

ABIGAIL F. DAUM

**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS**

**PROFESSOR LEMASTER
PROFESSOR LEMOINE**

DECEMBER 9TH, 2016

Abstract

The aim of the proposed study is to examine the effects of the transition into new motherhood and the differences in these effects among American and French primiparous mothers. The study establishes the societal pressures and cultural expectations placed on the motherhood role, historically and to the present day, and presents possible sources for maternal guilt, role strain, and a sense of loss of individuated self in the transition to new motherhood. This mixed methods study uses semi-structured interviews, vignettes, the Job-Family Role Strain Scale, and the Motherhood Salience Scale to determine the effects of the transition into the new mother role. American mothers, compared with French mothers, are expected to feel more societal pressure related to motherhood, practice more intensive mothering, feel more “Supermom” pressure, feel more role strain related to work-family balance, feel more maternal guilt, place motherhood higher on their identity salience hierarchy, and feel more of a loss of individuated self. This research may provide a fuller understanding of the motherhood role and how the shift into new motherhood is felt cross-culturally.

Keywords: motherhood, cross-cultural differences, United States, France

“I’m not just losing my figure. I’m also losing a sense of myself as someone who once went on dinner dates and worried about the Palestinians. I now spend my free time studying late-model strollers and memorizing the possible causes of colic. This evolution from ‘woman’ to ‘mom’ feels inevitable” (Druckerman, 2012 p. 20). Druckerman, an American writer and journalist raising her children in Paris, France, describes in her best-selling book *Bringing up bébé: One American Mother Discovers the Wisdom of French Parenting* how she is losing her sense of self in the transition from “woman” to “mother.” Druckerman implies that “woman” and “mother” are separate identities, perhaps even separate roles, and that the transition from one to the other is inescapable. Furthermore, the comparison between American and French parenting that Druckerman presents is not a novel concept – many newspaper and online articles have discussed this comparison, primarily indicating that Americans should strive to parent like the French. The present study aims to explore the transition into new motherhood and the effects of this transition on American and French women. This study will first define motherhood ideology and the pressure that this ideology places on women, which could result in maternal guilt, role strain resulting from difficulties in achieving work-family balance, and how the transition to motherhood affects women’s sense of individuated self.

As Simone de Beauvoir states in *The Second Sex*, “*On ne naît pas femme: on le devient*” (One is not born a woman, one is made one), the role of a woman has been and continues to be socially constructed – ideas about what it means to be a woman have been consistently linked to the shifts and transitions of social and cultural matters within society (Eyer, 1992). A role, as defined by Biddle (1979), is “those behaviors characteristic of one or more persons in a context” (p. 58). More specifically, gender roles are “the set of behaviors culturally defined as appropriate

for one's sex. A woman who acts in accord with cultural prescriptions of feminine behavior is following a feminine gender role" (Lips, 2017 p. 161).

Fulfilling the motherhood role, i.e. becoming a mother, is inextricably linked to womanhood. Motherhood, like the role of a woman, is also shaped by societal and cultural forces. It is a consistent requirement and pressure for women, to the point that if a woman is considered a "bad mother," she is also considered a "bad woman" (Mauthner, 1999). The notion that a woman would be something other than being a mother (and a wife) is even considered virtually unimaginable (Bem & Bem, 1970, as cited in Russo, 1976), suggesting that motherhood is ingrained in the concept of womanhood. This link has been conceptualized as the motherhood mandate, first defined by Russo (1976) as "a woman's *raison d'être*" (the reason that women exist) (p. 4). The components of the motherhood mandate are that *all* women should be mothers, and that a "good mother" is evaluated by the quantity of time she spends with her children. If a woman does not fulfill the motherhood mandate, she may feel that she has not lived up to her duty as a woman. The motherhood mandate extends to all women to the point that women without children are seen as an abnormality (Badinter, 2013), and that not having children is considered a "deficient condition" (Russo, 1976 p. 149).

The "good mother" idea within the motherhood mandate has even gone so far as to develop into a persona known as "Supermom." According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, a "Supermom" is: "an exemplary mother; a woman who performs the traditional duties of housekeeping and child-rearing while also having a full-time job." Thus, the Supermom is a mother who simultaneously has two roles, as a mother and as a worker. She not only has two roles, which could indicate role strain, "the felt difficulty in fulfilling role obligations" (Goode,

1960 p. 483), but she also has to be a perfect, flawless mother, indicating how important it is to be a good mother.

The motherhood mystique, while related to the motherhood mandate, is a separate set of idealistic beliefs about motherhood. The motherhood mystique states: motherhood is the fundamental source of fulfillment for women and thus all women should experience motherhood; a woman naturally possesses the abilities that are necessary for mothering, and if she needs to work at these abilities, or feels conflict with the requirements of her role, she is “unhealthy or maladjusted;” “good mothers enjoy motherhood” and all the tasks that come with it; and, finally, full-time mothering is the only way for a child to optimally develop, and women who try to join motherhood and employment outside the home are “inferior and inadequate” (Johnston-Robledo, 2000 p. 133-134). This is consistent with ideals within the female gender role that women are selfless and self-sacrificing. Some women have in fact responded positively to the statement “Considering my needs to be as important as those of the people I love is selfish” (Jack, 1991, p. 235). The motherhood mystique and the female gender role, taken together, could indicate that a woman loses her sense of self as an individual by putting her needs below those of her child’s.

The notion of “intensive” mothering ideology is also implicated in the definition of a “good mother.” Intensive mothering is a model that recommends or encourages mothers “to expend a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money in raising their children” (Hays, 1996 p. x). Intensive mothering suggests that a mother should use all of her resources to raise her child well and put everything else on hold in order to achieve this goal. The intensive mothering ideology could result in maternal guilt or loss of individuated self. Indeed, mothers have identified a certain loss of self in trying to be a “good mother.” Connecting a loss of self and

motherhood, Jack (1991) interviewed women, measuring the “silencing of the self” phenomenon and its link to depression. One of the participants said:

“You can’t be Supermom and can’t do it all, and yet we all have this image that we can, and we measure ourselves by the standards of our mothers in terms of raising kids. You know, I feel guilty when I’m not there with the warm milk and cookies and when I’m not putting every Band-Aid on. And then I’m guilty...because I’m not doing an adequate job professionally and never quite getting it all right” (Jack, 1991 p. 233-234).

The participant describes feeling guilty because she has too many roles to fill in attempting to be a “Supermom” and feels as though she is not performing those roles appropriately, which results in, according to Jack (1991), a feeling of loss of self. This study aims to explore where these feelings of guilt originate, and if they are upheld cross-culturally in American and French cultures. This study ultimately aims to understand the transition into new motherhood and how this transition has an impact on American and French women.

American motherhood: historical perspective

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Puritan New England developed ideals about motherhood. In this region of the United States, society believed that individual women did not know how to best raise their children – women during this time period were appreciated for their fertility, as opposed to their childrearing abilities (Ulrich, 1982 as cited in Hays, 1996). The ideal of motherhood as a role transitioned in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: the task of motherhood became more valued, and affection became a vital component in the mother-child relationship. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the growth of a child’s conscience was rooted in maternal devotion, and depended on the mother’s vigilant attention to the suitable socialization of her children. The good mother ought to not only shower her child with maternal affection, but also needs to be continuously cautious and mindful in sustaining her own virtuousness and is expected to utilize the appropriate practices to foster

similar virtuousness in her child – a task that is both physically and emotionally demanding for a woman. This transition ultimately implicated the individual mother as the best source for the practice of childrearing (Hays, 1996).

Middle-class motherhood ideologies once again transitioned toward the end of the nineteenth century in the United States. Rather than relying on a mother's instincts for childrearing, she had to remain up to date about "scientific" understandings of childrearing in order to use the best practices that experts recommended. For example, G. Stanley Hall, in *Youth: Its Education, Regimen and Hygiene* (1904) noted that maternal affection was inadequate: women needed to be informed, and only experts could supply this knowledge (as cited in Hays, 1996), thus expanding the duties required of a mother in order to properly raise her children.

La Leche League (LLL), an organization dedicated to promoting breastfeeding, emerged in America during the 1950s, during a time period when the social roles of American women both as mothers and as working women were debated. The practice of breastfeeding is seen as part of the maternal instinct: breastfeeding is a continuation of the natural, deep connection that undoubtedly starts between a mother and her baby during pregnancy. Many agree that a "good mother" chooses to breastfeed – if she chooses not to, the mother is viewed as intentionally putting her child's health at risk (Wall, 2001). LLL sought to vindicate traditional domesticity against the development of advanced industrial life (i.e. preventing women from seeking jobs outside the home), and to honor the biological perspective of motherhood. LLL's purpose was to bring mother and baby together through the "womanly art of breastfeeding" (Weiner, 1994 p. 1358). The league supported the pro-natalist viewpoint emerging during the postwar period in the United States, arguing that motherhood was "natural" and advantageous to women, children, and the "social order" (p. 1364). LLL argued not only that women should be on constant demand

for nursing in order to fully benefit the child, but that breastfeeding would be a woman's ultimate life goal, furthering that motherhood is a woman's ultimate fulfillment as a woman. The first LLL policy statement from 1964 stated:

“a mother who chooses to mother through breastfeeding, finds it an excellent way to grow in mothering as her baby grows in years. And since the woman who grows in mothering thereby grows as a human being, any other role she may fill in her lifetime will be enriched and deepened by the insights and humanity she will bring to it from her experience as a mother” (La Leche League News, 6 (July-Aug. 1964), p. 1-2, as cited in Weiner, 1994 p. 1370).

LLL thus agreed with the motherhood mandate in their belief that the ultimate fulfilling role for a woman is that of a mother. LLL opened branches around the world, including France in 1973 (Badinter, 2013).

During the 1960s and 1970s, maternal employment became a larger societal issue in the United States, attributable to pressures of economic strain, lower fertility rates, and the progress of feminism. The ideal that women's lives revolved entirely around domestic tasks was deemed old fashioned as family ideals transitioned to support maternal employment (Weiner, 1994). The idea that a mother needs to be constantly available to her children has been used as a rationalization to keep women out of the workforce, a pressure that has been present for centuries in American history (Eyer, 1992). This pressure is still felt in the United States today.

French motherhood: historical perspective

Prior to the eighteenth century, the ideal French mother had a distant, unconcerned manner of raising children – while motherhood was seen as necessary for the continuation her husband's lineage, it did not define her as a woman. In fact, the ideal French woman did not trouble herself with motherhood, which was seen as divergent from her responsibilities as an esteemed woman. Infants, seen as an unnecessary burden in the woman's life, were frequently handed off to wet nurses, a woman who is not the biological mother in charge of breastfeeding

and taking care of a child. Women during this time period were more interested in determining a comprehensive role for themselves, and freeing themselves from intensive, individual motherhood which did not fulfill their lives (Badinter, 2013). French motherhood during this time period serves as a counter-example of the motherhood mandate and the motherhood mystique ideologies.

During the eighteenth century, however, motherhood transitioned: the ideal French mother was more involved and devoted (Badinter, 2013). Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a French philosopher, was a pivotal figure in French societal definitions of good childrearing during this time period. Rousseau depicted a child as an “innocent” human, requiring a mother’s care and attention in order to be a fully formed member of French society (Rousseau, 1761, 1762, as cited in Hays, 1996). Furthermore, the established practice of giving children to wet nurses, who often had financial limitations, was one explanation of the high rate of infant mortality during this time period. Therefore, physicians, philosophers, and the Catholic church pressured mothers to care for and breastfeed their own children, which not only redefined motherhood as more biologically oriented, but ultimately confined women to the home. Breastfeeding became the “natural answer” to the increasing anxiety of not only infant mortality, but of women’s increasing participation in the public sphere. The push for women to breastfeed reflects a more comprehensive, wider attempt to control French women through motherhood (Lastinger, 1996). The push towards the natural maternal bond between mother and child thus served as a mechanism for keeping women in the home. Thus, the motherhood role has been used by French society to push women from pursuing careers outside of the duties of motherhood.

Later, in the nineteenth century, Jules Simon, a French political leader and philosopher, argued in *La Femme du vingtième siècle* (1892), “There are good and bad wives; [but] there are

only good mothers. A bad mother, if such exists, is against nature. One would not know how to classify her, nor understand her” (as cited in Cole, 1996). Motherhood became the quintessence of French womanhood, and the importance of being a “good mother” was highlighted during this time period. In the late-nineteenth century, women’s bodies were viewed as the pivotal instruments for solving the fertility crisis and maintaining France’s survival (Cole, 1996).

French demographers during the late-nineteenth century defined the “fertility index” as “a ratio between the number of births and the total population of women of childbearing age,” fortifying a socially defined interdependence between womanhood and motherhood (Cole, 1996 p. 646). Today, France has the highest birthrate in the European Union (Eurostat, 2016), and one of the highest birthrates of the industrialized Western nations.

American and French mothers today

Comparing American and French mothers today, there are a variety of similarities and differences. For example, American mothers assign more importance to parenting practices affiliated with emotional attachment and closeness and responsiveness to the baby’s needs, while French mothers view these practices as less important. American mothers also consider responding to infants (i.e. feeding a baby “on demand” and picking a baby up immediately when he or she begin to cry) of greater importance than French mothers (Suizzo, 2004). This finding could indicate that French mothers do not value the practice of intensive mothering as much as American mothers, since American mothers consider it more important to be constantly available to respond to their child’s every need compared with French mothers. French mothers also place higher value on routines intended to encourage “autonomy and individuality” in their children compared with American mothers, such as promoting and helping the child to develop his or her

own amusement (p. 613), which could further highlight that French mothers practice less intensive, hands-on mothering than American mothers.

In fact, French parenting advice indicates that a French woman should not give up her own freedom in order to be a good mother. French childcare handbooks, from the 1970s to the present day, have warned French mothers about being excessively responsive to their babies (practices such as responding immediately after a baby cries, or co-sleeping). These practices may foster a loss of freedom for French mothers, as if they have become “slaves” to their children (Suizzo, 2004). French mothers are thus encouraged to maintain their sense of autonomy when becoming mothers, in order to avoid beckoning to their child’s every need, whereas American mothers are encouraged to be intensive and attentive to their child’s every need, i.e. succumb their own needs to be “slaves” for their child’s needs. Furthermore, a study comparing American, French, and Argentinian parenting styles found that American mothers rated themselves as more sensitive, loving, and “stimulating” than did French and Argentinian mothers (Bornstein et al., 1996 p. 356). American mothers appear to adhere to their child’s every need, based on their more responsive parenting style and their use of more stimulating mothering practices, while French mothers appear to practice less responsive, intensive mothering, which could be because they do not want to lose their sense of individuated self in becoming a mother.

Less “closely tethered” intensive mothering practices could explain why French women have fewer negative feelings towards childrearing than American women. American women had a higher U-index for childcare and a higher percent of time spent on childcare than French women (U-index defined as the proportion of time that individuals spend in an unpleasant emotional state, i.e. a period of time when the strongest emotional state is a negative one) (Krueger et al., 2009). As Druckerman (2012) describes, the French have figured out how to be

involved parents without being obsessive. French parents presume that even “good parents” are not at their children’s every beckoning call, and that it is not necessary to feel guilty about this. Thus, perhaps French mothers do not experience negative feelings, such as guilt, in rejecting aspects of the motherhood mandate and the motherhood mystique, while American mothers might.

As a result, French women could have less of a loss of sense of individuated self, defined as “the person’s sense of unique identity differentiated from others” (Brewer & Gardner, 1996 p. 83), compared with American mothers. Most French women today aspire to a triple role: wife, mother, and professional. Motherhood symbolizes only one element in a French woman’s achievement – perhaps mandatory, but not enough in and of itself to define her identity. Indeed, French women do not want to give up any facet of their lives, neither motherhood nor their personal aspirations (Badinter, 2013), further indicating that they perhaps do not lose their sense of unique self in adding motherhood to their self-concept. Furthermore, regarding the choice to breastfeed, “French mothers tended to choose the type of feeding [breast vs. bottle] more in relation to their own condition or feelings,” rather than succumbing to the rigid motherhood ideology of intensive, maternal instinct (Negayama et al., 2012 p. 87). Bottle-feeding is viewed as a middle ground designed to balance a French woman’s personal goals with her responsibilities as a mother – it signifies that a woman has “freedom of movement,” thus fortifying the capacity to be both a woman and a mother (Badinter, 2013). French mothers, in choosing bottle-feeding, seem to disregard the “natural” mothering perspective in motherhood ideology, and as a result, are able to maintain both “woman” and “mother” as part of their identities, potentially indicating less of a loss of individuated self than American mothers.

Maternal guilt – expectations versus reality

“I always feel guilty. I still feel guilty now [that] she’s older when I think about it...” (Choi et al., 2005 p. 174).

Sociologists Stets and Turner (2006) have defined guilt as a displeasing, distressing thought or feeling that “involves the violation of a moral or social standard” (as cited in Glavin et al., 2011 p. 45). Thus, if mothers do not fulfill the societal expectations of motherhood, guilt serves as a logical response. One source of this guilt could be the conflict between the expectations of motherhood, as set by the motherhood mystique, and the reality of motherhood. British mothers in Choi et al. (2005) reported that motherhood had either not been what they anticipated, or they were unsure what to anticipate, and any expectations they could have had were heavily impacted by the ideology of motherhood (i.e. the motherhood mandate and the motherhood mystique). Once becoming mothers, they realized that this ideology is starkly contrasting with the reality of being a mother. For example, British mothers overwhelmingly claimed feeling “underprepared” for motherhood after the birth of their first child, strongly conflicting the “maternal instinct” idea within the motherhood mystique that mothering “comes naturally to women” (p. 172-173).

The motherhood mystique ideology thus creates a feeling of inadequacy in mothers, feeling that they are not able to live up to such high standards. As one mother described, “You felt like you should know it all, it was some sort of inbuilt program for mothers that should come in your brain...” (p. 175). The belief in the maternal instinct also implies that women should be good at mothering by themselves – British mothers reported that they experience feelings of inadequacy in attempting to cope with the difficulties of new motherhood alone, because they could not accept that the transition is challenging and could not admit that to others (Choi et al., 2005). Thus, feelings of inadequacy and guilt could result from the conflict between the

expectations of motherhood and the reality. This conflict was also described by American mothers as hearing two “voices:” the first voice dictating the cultural values and role of motherhood (i.e. the good mother), and the other voice inspired by the “actual, concrete, everyday experiences of mothering” (Mauthner, 1999 p. 153).

Guilt is such a universal aspect of motherhood in the United States that it is present in women who are considering motherhood in the future. In a study conducted by Jacques & Radtke (2012), a college-aged American woman described how she would feel guilty if she were to pick a career that, for example (from her perspective), required a great deal of traveling for work. She used the specific words “my kids” in her response three times, and only brought up the subject of men as an opposite: “I feel like it would be my fault...it wouldn’t necessarily be his fault? ...I don’t think a lot of guys would feel guilty about that all” (p. 454-455). This woman’s response indicates that a mother should feel guilty for choosing a career that may require her to be less than a “good mother,” and that a mother should assume all responsibility for this guilt, not a potential husband. Thus, perhaps role strain from work-family balance is another source of maternal guilt.

Maternal guilt – work-family balance, role overload and role strain

As dictated by the motherhood mandate, “If [a mother] does work, she frequently must deal with guilt engendered by the motherhood mandate – despite the lack of evidence that working mothers have detrimental effects on children” (Russo, 1976 p. 150). A “good mother” in the United States simply does not work, either for financial reasons or self-fulfillment, and should not work outside of taking care of her children in the home (Demeis & Perkins, 1996). If

she does have a career outside the home, she must face maternal guilt, as per motherhood ideology.

In reality, American working mothers were found to work “the equivalent of nearly two full-time jobs” in hours spent caring for the home and hours spent working (Demeis & Perkins, 1996), which could lead to role overload, “when the total demands of time and energy associated with the prescribed activities of multiple roles are too great to perform the roles adequately or comfortably” (Duxbury et al., 1994 p. 450). The feeling of role overload could result in role strain, “the felt difficulty in fulfilling role obligations” (Goode, 1960 p. 483). Canadian working mothers were found to experience more overload than working fathers (Duxbury et al., 1994). Having two roles to balance can also lead to role blurring: when the dividing lines that divide work and family become “blurred,” the resulting cognitive or behavioral shift could result in the impression that one is not fulfilling either role correctly or appropriately, which results in negative feelings of well-being, such as guilt (Greenhaus et al., 2006).

Not only do they work two “jobs,” but working mothers can be considered both less of a “good mother” than stay-at-home mothers but also less like “good employees,” compared with working women who do not have children (Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002). Working mothers are thus seen as performing both roles inadequately. Indeed, as Russo (1979) explains, “incompatibility with other roles is...built into society’s definition of good motherhood” (p. 8). Even if a woman can handle multiple roles (for example, mother and worker), “she is in violation of the motherhood mandate and may face personal feelings of guilt...” (p. 8). According to the motherhood mandate, a good mother should only fulfill one role, that of a mother.

The idea of violating the motherhood role fits with the construct of gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes, which “reflect perceivers’ observations of what people do in their daily life,”

reinforce the idea that mothers should remain home, since people are more likely to have seen almost entirely women in the homemaker role, and overall more men in the workforce than women (Eagly & Steffen, 1984 p. 735). When an individual does not behave properly according to their designated role (i.e. mother), they are often faced with criticism and possibly explicit hostility and animosity from other individuals (Darley, 1976).

This hostility and animosity can be seen in societal attitudes towards working mothers. Working mothers are often minimized in the workplace, arising from the claim that working mothers are not devoted to their children (Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002). American working mothers were viewed as more devoted to their roles as mothers when they were dissatisfied with their choice to keep working outside of the home than when they were satisfied with said choice (Demeis & Perkins, 1996), highlighting that they cannot simultaneously be a good, devoted mother if they are satisfied with their job outside of the home. Furthermore, when comparing financial strain and personal fulfillment as reasons for a mother of an infant to return to work, financial strain, but not personal fulfillment, was deemed as a legitimate reason for returning to work (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995, as cited in Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002). A woman's personal fulfillment should not be in anything other than the role of motherhood, fitting with the motherhood mandate and the motherhood mystique.

The general population may inherently presume that motherhood indicates a diminished ability to fulfill duties outside the childcare sphere, i.e. in the workplace. Ridgeway & Correll (2004) infer that motherhood, in fact, results in bias in the workplace, also referred to as the "motherhood penalty" (Gash, 2009). Furthermore, if a working mother is aware of the biases and judgments against her as she incorporates the two roles together, she sustains a great deal of

“self-doubt and internal tension” (Darley, 1976 p. 91), which could be seen as internalized maternal guilt resulting from role strain.

Role strain could also result in a silencing of the self. Mothers have previously indicated that they value their careers and try to fulfill ideals about how to be a good worker, which conflict with what is required of them as mothers. As the aforementioned “Supermom” case example from Jack (1991) indicates, in attempting to successfully fulfill two demanding societal roles, a working woman and a mother silences facets of self in both areas. Thus, filling two roles could result in a loss of individuated self.

French women provide an interesting contrast to these findings. Comparing American and French mothers, “[French] college-educated mothers rarely ditch their careers, temporarily or permanently, after having kids...Back in the US, I know lots of women who’ve stopped working to raise their kids” (Druckerman, 2012 p. 135). French women question what their own quality of life would be if they were constantly devoted to their children as stay-at-home mothers, since French culture portrays the image of a stay-at-home mother as one of solitude and isolation (Druckerman, 2012). Therefore, unlike American culture, perhaps French society does not pressure working mothers to give up their career in order to be “good mothers.”

In fact, France has a strong societal support for maternal employment. As a country, France is one of the world leaders within modern industrialized states regarding the accessibility and convenience of publicly funded or publicly managed quality childcare services, therefore strongly supporting and encouraging women’s participation in the workforce (Gornick et al., 1997, as cited in Morgan, 2003). The French have a guaranteed access to excellent publicly provided and funded childcare, known as *crèches collectives* (Almqvist, 2007; Gash, 2009), which give French mothers the opportunity to have an occupation outside the home (Morgan,

2003). Other policies, such as the *allocation de garde d'enfant à domicile* and the *aide à la famille pour l'emploi d'une assistante maternelle agréée*, provide support for hiring caregivers and are designed to promote parental freedom to choose work within French society (Almqvist, 2007). The *crèches* and subsidized nannies make it stupendously easier for French women to return to work, who can then return to work because they genuinely want to (Druckerman, 2012).

Furthermore, French working mothers may not experience role strain as much as American working mothers. Compared with American and Japanese mothers, French mothers were distinctive in their high percentage of selecting “back to work” as the principal reason for weaning their young children off breastfeeding (Negayama et al., 2012). Indeed, time of return to work was an important predictor for terminating breastfeeding, whether full-time or part-time work, for French women. This could be because overall, women in France feel uncomfortable in merging work with breastfeeding or are incapable of doing so (Bonet et al., 2013). Perhaps the dual role conflict is not as pressing or distressing for French mothers because they do not attempt to combine work and intensive mothering (in this case, in the form of breastfeeding) as American mothers do.

Loss of individuated self

This study hypothesizes that in the transition to new motherhood, American mothers lose more of a sense of individuated self than French mothers. Brewer & Gardner (1996) define the individuated self-concept as “the person’s sense of unique identity differentiated from others” (p. 83). This definition will be used to define the concept of individuated self as described in the rest of the study.

The self, as defined by Stryker (1968) is “a set of responses of an organism to itself” (p. 560), essentially how an individual understands and reacts to themselves in a given surrounding context. One way to conceptualize the self is using an identity salience hierarchy. Identity salience is “the probability, for a given person, of a given identity being invoked in a variety of situations” (p. 560). Thus, an identity hierarchy is constructed, such that an individual could feel, in a variety of contexts, that a certain identity (or role) is more salient, is more predominant and central, than another.

In this study, it is hypothesized that for American mothers, the transition to motherhood could result in mothers putting their “mother” identity higher in their individual identity saliency hierarchies than “woman,” which could indicate more of a loss of individuated self than French mothers. In constructing their identities, motherhood facilitates identity changes among women, because they are confronted with incorporating both the realities and their own experiences of motherhood in contrast with the motherhood mystique ideal (Laney et al., 2015). Transitioning into the role of new motherhood, British mothers “experienced considerable loss as their lives became consumed by the tasks of mothering” (Choi et al., 2005 p. 176-177). American women have also described that the transition into motherhood was made to be incredibly challenging because many women reported losing their identities to motherhood, but after some time, recovering a reconceived self (Laney et al., 2015).

Oberman & Josselson (1996) propose a matrix of tensions for understanding the role of motherhood and how it affects women’s sense of self, with the first tension being *loss of self* vs. *expansion of self*. The transition to motherhood is felt throughout a mother’s life, but the conflict between a woman’s loss of self and the acclimation to the gaining of another is felt most during the first few months of motherhood. A mother must incorporate, even give up, her needs as an

individual to those of another, whose need of her could endanger the mother's sense of separate, unique selfhood. At the same time, however, as a mother, a woman has obtained a new identity: as someone who "gives, tends, nourishes, and creates" (p. 345). As Oberman & Josselson (1996) argue, some sense of self is lost, possibly permanently, when a woman becomes a mother, or, at least, the divisions between the self and the child are never solidly closed off, so that a mother always continues to be attached to her child.

Based on the rigid ideology of motherhood and how the practice of intensive mothering consumes a woman's life in the transition into motherhood, mothers could feel a loss of individuated self, which in turn could result from the higher placement of "mother" in their identity salience hierarchy. As one American mother described, "Something has to give under the pressure of parenthood, and I think it is often your own identity" (Weaver & Ussher, 1997 p. 65). Since it appears that American mothers could be practicing more of a responsive, all-encompassing type of mothering than French mothers, it is hypothesized that American mothers have more of a loss of individuated self than French mothers.

Overview of the proposed study

While the majority of the research previously described has been conducted on American participants, particularly the theoretical perspectives and explanations, it can be applied to French participants as well, and the ideals of mothering can be compared and contrasted among the two populations. This study will be examining French and American women's transition into new motherhood, and whether this transition results in a feeling of maternal guilt, role strain, and a loss of individuated self. The study hypothesizes the following: there will be differences in cultural expectations of motherhood between American and French mothers; cultural

expectations of motherhood will predict maternal guilt; French women feel less maternal guilt than American women; cultural expectations of motherhood will mediate the relationship between nationality and maternal guilt; role strain from work-family balance predicts loss of individuated self and maternal guilt; French mothers feel less role strain than American mothers; role strain will predict maternal guilt; role strain will mediate the relationship between nationality and maternal guilt; American mothers put “motherhood” higher on their identity salience hierarchy than French women do; the placement of “motherhood” as higher on the identity salience hierarchy predicts loss of individuated self; and, finally, while transitioning into new motherhood, American mothers lose more of a sense of individuated self than French mothers do. Participants will be primiparous American and French mothers who have an infant ranging from one to three years old, and who also work full-time. In order to determine cultural understandings of motherhood and the pressure of the motherhood mandate and motherhood mystique in both America and France, the study will begin with semi-structured interviews, followed by a series of vignettes measuring maternal guilt, a scale measuring role strain resulting from work-family balance, and a scale measuring the identity salience of motherhood. The following variables will be measured in order to test the above hypotheses: cultural expectations of motherhood, maternal guilt, role strain, motherhood identity salience, and loss of individuated self.

Proposed Method

Participants

The participants will be American and French primiparous mothers between the ages of 25 and 35 years old. The sample size will be 70 participants, with approximately equal numbers

of American and French participants – this sample size will be needed, based on previous findings (e.g. Bornstein et al., 1996), to produce a power of 0.80 with a medium estimated effect size, $\alpha = 0.05$, according to Cohen (1992). Both groups of mothers will have to have been born in their native country (the United States or France) and will not hold any other citizenships or have lived outside of their native country for more than 6 months. It is anticipated that the participants will be Caucasian, as that is the majority racial demographic in both countries. The participants must be heterosexual and married for at least two years before giving birth to their child. The participants' child must be between one and three years old. In terms of conception and pregnancy, the participants must have become pregnant through a planned pregnancy, and through natural means (as opposed to in vitro fertilization, for example), and the pregnancy and childbirth processes need to have been healthy with no medical complications. The participants must also have had a full-time job prior to giving birth to their child, and must have returned to their full-time jobs after giving birth and taking their respective maternity leaves. Participants will be recruited through flyers posted in pediatrician's offices, "Mommy and Me" classes (and the equivalent in France), public parks, bus stops, etc. Men will not be recruited for the purposes of this study. For their participation, participants will be given a \$20 gift card to Zara, which has both women's and baby clothing.

Materials

Semi-structured interview.

Part I. There will be two parts to the semi-structured interview: one part focusing on cultural expectations of motherhood and questions related to maternal guilt, while the second part will examine a mother's loss of individuated self. With the participant's permission, the

interview will be audio recorded, in order to better facilitate later data analysis purposes, as the interview may deviate from the interview guide per the flow of the conversation. The researcher will speak the native language of the participant (English or French) so as to best facilitate the interview. The first part of the semi-structured interview will attempt to address the following main themes: conflict between high expectations and reality, intensive mothering, Supermom pressure, loss of freedom, feelings of inadequacy, feelings of guilt, and more feelings of role strain as a result of work-family balance. The interview guide will include 14 questions, with one question related to guilt from Glavin et al. (2011). Questions will include: “How do you feel about being a mother?” “What do you think your society believes it is to be a mother?” “What are the cultural expectations of motherhood in your culture?”, and “Do you find it difficult to meet those expectations?” The interviews will take approximately 45-60 minutes, and will be transcribed by an English or French research assistant, depending on the native language of the participant. The transcripts will be coded (after achieving sufficient inter-rater reliability between the researcher and two research assistants) for the themes mentioned above. Each transcript will be rated on a 4-point Likert-scale for how strongly each participant discusses the theme in the interview, ranging from: 1 – “strongly,” 2 – “moderately”, 3 – “weakly” 4 – “not at all.” Finally, each participant will then receive an averaged interview score. See Appendix A for Part I interview guide.

Part II. In this set of questions, participants will be asked about their sense of loss of individuated self while transitioning into new motherhood. There are four self-developed questions for this interview that will relate to the theme of loss of individuated self. Each transcript will be rated on the same 4-point Likert-scale as the Part I transcripts, but for the

presence of the theme “loss of individuated self.” The interview will take approximately 10-15 minutes. See Appendix B for Part II interview guide.

Vignettes. The researcher will provide two vignettes, each describing a scenario, and will ask the participant various questions related to their reactions to each scenario. The vignettes used in this study (see Appendix C) will be on the subject of motherhood, work-family balance, and role strain. In each vignette, a mother will have two conflicting responsibilities, one involving an obligation to her child in her role as a mother, and another responsibility involving an obligation to her full-time job. The manipulated variable is whether or not the mother in the scenario chooses her motherhood or her career role: in the first vignette, the mother chooses her career role, while in the second vignette, she chooses her motherhood role. Each vignette will be accompanied with the same set of questions at the bottom. The questions will ask the participant to imagine themselves in the vignette scenario, and have them answer questions about how they would react if they were the mother in the vignette – for example, “If you were the mother in this scenario, would you feel guilty?” The participants will respond on a 4-point Likert scale as to how guilty they would feel, ranging from 4 – “very guilty” to 1 – “not guilty at all.” For each vignette, each participant will be scored and then the two scores will be averaged to create a total composite score, with higher scores indicating more maternal guilt. The vignettes should take around 10 minutes for the participant to complete. See Appendix D for vignette follow-up questions. This measure may result in social desirability bias.

Job-Family Role Strain. The Job-Family Role Strain Scale was created by Bohlen & Viveros-Long (1981) to measure role strain as a result of work-family conflict. The summated rating scale includes 19 items that are rated in terms of whether the participant agrees with the statement on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – “always,” to 5 – “never.” The scale is

scored on as a summed score, with higher sum scores marking more job-family role strain. The reliability for this scale, tested using Cronbach's α , is 0.71 (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981 as cited in Beere, 1990), which is a good value for reliability. Content validity was demonstrated using a committee of six judges, including psychologists, a sociologist, and "federal personnel experts," (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981 p. 236) who rated the items based on how well they believed that the content measured what the scale intends to measure (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981), thus indicating that the scale has good content validity. Concurrent validity was also determined, as the authors found that scores on the Job-Family Role Strain Scale were positively correlated to "the number of hours worked by the respondent, the length of time spent commuting, and the number of hours worked by the respondent's spouse" (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981 p. 237), thus establishing good concurrent validity. This scale should take about 10 minutes for the participant to complete. See Appendix E for Job-Family Role Strain Scale items.

Motherhood Salience. Callero (1985) created a five-item measure of identity salience entitled the Blood-Donor Salience Scale in order to study the role-identity saliency of the blood donor role. For the purposes of this study, the Blood-Donor Salience Scale will be reconstructed to reflect this study on the motherhood role – thus, it will be renamed the "Motherhood Salience Scale." The scale will be measuring the level at which motherhood is linked to an individual's identity: the more motherhood is connected to an individual's thought, feelings, and identity, the more it is deemed a part of the self. The items are rated based on how much the participant agrees with the statement on a 9-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 – "strongly disagree" to 9 – "strongly agree," and responses are averaged to create the scale score. Sample items include: "I would feel a loss if I were not a mother" and "Motherhood is an important part of who I am." The reliability was tested using the reliability coefficient Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81$ (Callero, 1985),

which is a good value for reliability. Callero (1985) claims that the scale also has validity as the items are of “relatively diverse substance” that are thus able to illustrate regularly high inter-item correlations (p. 208), although inter-item correlations is generally a measure of reliability.

Convergent validity was also established, in that the author correlated the Blood-Donor Saliency Scale with another measure of blood-donor saliency, finding that for both measures, the identity rankings and the saliency scales are highly correlated and produce similar results, thus establishing the validity of the Blood-Donor Saliency Scale (Callero, 1985). This test will take 5-10 minutes for the participant to complete. See Appendix F for Motherhood Saliency Scale items.

Procedure

If interested in participating in the study, participants will call the researcher to confirm a meeting place in either a café or a coffee shop. Prior to beginning the study itself, if the participant does not already have childcare arranged for the duration of the study (which will be approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes), the participant will coordinate with the researcher so that a research assistant can watch her child. Upon arrival, the researcher will begin by providing an informed consent form, explaining the nature and purpose of the study. If the participant agrees, the researcher will begin the study with the first part of the interviews. Then, the participants will read the vignettes provided and respond to prompts about the vignettes. The participants will then complete the Job-Family Role Strain Scale, and the Motherhood Saliency Scale. Lastly, the participants will go through the second part of the interviews. After completing the study, the participant will be debriefed, and thanked and compensated.

Ethics

For this research, the participants, American and French first-time mothers (who are not a protected population), will not be undergoing more than minimal risk by choosing to participate. In this study, participants will be asked to divulge their experience and feelings regarding the transition to motherhood. Deception will not be used in this study. Participants will be provided with a detailed informed consent form elucidating that their participation is completely voluntary, they do not have an obligation to participate in the study, and they can withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. For example, if a mother does not wish to participate because she does not want to leave her child for the period of time during which the study would be conducted, she will not be forced to participate. Within the informed consent step of the research procedure, potential participants will also be clearly told that the data that will be collected will be confidential. In order to ensure confidentiality, an identifying code will be used for each participant, and the collected data will be kept in a secure environment. For the interviews, while the researcher will meet with the participant in person, the participant's name will not be used. Any personal information that arise in a participant's interview response will be removed from the transcript.

Discussing motherhood, the transition into new motherhood, and a potential resulting loss of individuated self can be challenging and stressful topics for some. However, interviewing women about their motherhood experience would likely be beneficial for the mothers in this study. Participants will be compensated for their time and participation, and will hopefully leave with a better understanding of their roles as mothers and the pressure that society places on them to fulfill the motherhood role. A better understanding of the motherhood mandate, the motherhood mystique, and "Supermom" ideology could potentially help alleviate the pressure of

these societal constructs for both the participants themselves, and for mothers in general (if the mothers feel that these pressures exist for them in the first place). Thus, the benefits outweigh the risks in conducting this research. This study will add to the existing literature on motherhood by providing potential sources for the maternal guilt phenomenon, and a comparative cultural perspective, and a general understanding of the impact of the transition to motherhood on a woman's sense of individuated self.

Predicted Results

This mixed methods study is designed to examine differences in the transition to motherhood for French and American first-time mothers.

Themes in interview data – cultural expectations of motherhood

The interviews will be coded based on the strength of the presence of the following expected themes that will establish the variable cultural expectations of motherhood: conflict between high expectations and reality, intensive mothering, loss of freedom, feelings of inadequacy and guilt, Supermom pressure (pressure to be both a good mother and work full-time), work-family balance role strain, and loss of individuated self.

An independent samples *t*-test will be conducted to compare cultural expectations of motherhood in American and French mothers, finding a significant difference between the two groups. Thus, the hypothesis that American and French mothers will have differences in cultural expectations of motherhood will be supported. Specifically, examining the strength of the coded themes in the semi-structured interviews, American mothers will describe more of a conflict between high expectations and reality, will describe more intensive mothering as part of their

motherhood experience, will describe feeling more Supermom pressure, will describe more feelings of loss of freedom, more feelings of inadequacy, and will describe more feelings of role strain as a result of work-family balance, compared with French mothers. These findings are consistent with previous literature indicating that American mothers may feel these aspects more as part of their mothering experience and practices compared with French women (Bonet et al., 2013; Bornstein et al., 1996; Choi et al., 2005; Druckerman, 2012; Negayama et al., 2012; Suizzo, 2004).

Maternal guilt

The variable of maternal guilt is measured in two ways: the presence of the theme “maternal guilt” in the Semi-Structured Interview Part I transcript, and through the vignettes. A simple correlation test will confirm that these measures are significantly correlated, as they are both measuring maternal guilt.

Using nationality as a predictor for maternal guilt, an independent samples *t*-test will confirm that there are differences in feelings of maternal guilt between French and American mothers, specifically that French mothers feel less maternal guilt than American mothers. These findings align with previous research indicating that American mothers practice more intensive mothering practices and feel more pressure to be perfect mothers than French mothers (Bornstein et al., 1996; Suizzo, 2004). Additionally, using cultural expectations of motherhood as a predictor for maternal guilt, a simple correlation will be conducted to determine a significant relationship between the two variables.

To test if cultural expectations of motherhood mediates the difference in maternal guilt between American and French mothers, the first step, according to Baron & Kenny (1986), is to

establish a significant relationship between the predictor variable, nationality (American vs. French), and the outcome variable, maternal guilt. The second step is to establish a significant relationship between the predictor variable, nationality, and the mediating variable, cultural expectations of motherhood, as well as a significant relationship between the mediating variable and the outcome variable, maternal guilt. For these first two steps, significant relationships are presented as shown above.

Lastly, conducting a test of multiple regression with nationality and cultural expectations of motherhood as predictor variables, the relationship between nationality and maternal guilt will be weakened by the mediating variable, cultural expectations of motherhood. Thus, the relationship between nationality and maternal guilt is mediated by cultural expectations of motherhood. These results will indicate that the cultural expectations of motherhood of each society (American or French) explains the relationship between nationality (American vs. French) and maternal guilt. This aligns with the existing literature that French working mothers do not attempt to combine work and intensive mothering practices in the same way that American working mothers do (Bonet et al., 2013; Druckerman, 2012; Negayama et al., 2012).

Role strain

To test the differences between American and French mothers on role strain (as measured by the Job-Family Role Strain Scale), an independent samples *t*-test will confirm a difference between American and French mothers with regards to role strain. Specifically, it is expected that American mothers will report more role strain than French mothers. This finding fits with previous findings on how working mothers feel role strain in general, and how American working mothers might feel more role strain than French working mothers (Badinter, 2013;

Demeis & Perkins, 1996; Druckerman, 2012; Duxbury et al., 1994; Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002; Greenhaus et al., 2006; Russo, 1979). A simple correlation test will confirm that role strain also predicts maternal guilt.

Again using the method outlined by Baron & Kenny (1986) to test the mediating effects of role strain, the first step is to determine a significant relationship between nationality (American vs. French) and maternal guilt. Subsequently, a second set of simple correlation tests will be done to determine a significant relationship between nationality and role strain, the mediating variable, as well as between role strain and maternal guilt. These significant relationships are presented above. Lastly, a multiple regression test will be conducted to determine whether role strain weakens the relationship between nationality and maternal guilt. Multiple regression test results will confirm that the relationship between nationality and maternal guilt is mediated by role strain. This finding would demonstrate that role strain explains the relationship between nationality (American vs. French) and maternal guilt. This fits with previous research on American mothers that role strain could lead to feelings of maternal guilt (Darley, 1976; Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002; Greenhaus et al., 2006).

Motherhood identity salience

To test the differences in motherhood identity salience (as measured by the Motherhood Salience Scale) between American and French mothers, an independent samples *t*-test will be conducted. Test results will demonstrate that, as hypothesized, American mothers put “motherhood” higher on their identity salience hierarchy than French mothers do. As Stryker (1968) noted, an identity salience hierarchy is one way that the self can be conceptualized. Thus, perhaps American mothers prioritize motherhood as a larger part of their self than French

mothers. The identity salience hierarchy concept is used as a conceptualization of the self, such that a certain identity is more salient than another (Stryker, 1968). Thus, for American mothers, the “motherhood” role is more salient, more dominant in their concept of the self than French mothers.

Individuated self

Lastly, the hypotheses about loss of individuated self (as measured in the Part II semi-structured interview) state that American mothers will experience more of a loss of individuated self than French mothers. An independent samples *t*-test will be conducted to determine if a difference exists between American mothers and French mothers regarding loss of individuated self. Test results will demonstrate that American mothers feel more of a loss of individuated self than French mothers. These results make sense given that during the eighteenth century, middle- and upper-class French women were more focused on developing herself rather than being burdened with motherhood (Badinter, 2013; Hays, 1996), and that French women, to this day, do not seem to give up their sense of self in adding motherhood to their lives (Badinter, 2013; Druckerman, 2012; Suizzo, 2004).

Furthermore, a simple correlation test will be conducted to determine whether motherhood identity salience predicts loss of individuated self. Indeed, results will indicate that the placement of “motherhood” on the identity salience hierarchy positively predicts loss of individuated self. Role strain will also predict loss of individuated self, as results from a simple correlation test will reveal that this hypothesis will be supported – role strain has a significant positive relationship with loss of individuated self. As Oberman & Josselson (1996) discuss, one of the conflicts that mothers experience is *loss of self vs. expansion of self*, and mothers lose

some sense of self in transitioning into motherhood. It would make sense that new mothers who report high levels of role strain would feel a loss of individuated self, since in straining to fulfill the role of “mother” and “employee,” an individual’s sense of unique self could get lost in this strain. These results indicate that role strain could be a predictor of loss of individuated self in motherhood, and that American mothers feel this loss of individuated self significantly more than French mothers.

Conclusion

This proposed study suggests that American and French primiparous mothers have different experiences regarding the transition into new motherhood. The findings indicate that, compared with French mothers, American mothers feel more cultural expectations and pressure related to motherhood, practice more “intensive” mothering, feel more “Supermom” pressure, feel more role strain, feel more maternal guilt, place “motherhood” higher on their identity salience hierarchy, and feel more of a loss of individuated self. These findings highlight the intense pressure felt by mothers in America to be perfect mothers and to put the motherhood role first in their self-concept. This proposed research hopes to provide a better understanding of the pressures that mothers face while attempting to fulfill the demanding motherhood role, and helps to illuminate an important issue from the perspective of two different cultures.

There are a variety of limitations in conducting this study. First, the sample was limited to first-time mothers who are married to a heterosexual partner with a one- to three-year-old baby. Future research should further examine single motherhood, LGBTQ motherhood, mothers who became pregnant not via natural means, mothers who have more than one child, and motherhood as the child grows up and develops. Additionally, while the participants in this study

are married, this study did not examine the role of the husband and his contribution (or lack thereof) to parenting and to the woman's transition into motherhood, which would be another area of future research. Future research should also examine a mother's understanding of her transition to new motherhood changes as the child grows older, which is not captured in this study. Furthermore, regarding the vignettes, social desirability bias could play a role in the way that participants respond to the post-vignette questions.

Another limitation is the similarities between the United States and France. While American and French cultures are inherently different, the United States and France are both developed countries in the Western hemisphere and both are individualistic cultures. Future research should investigate cross-cultural comparisons between developed and non-developed countries, for example, to provide a richer understanding of cultural expectations of motherhood across different cultures, and how these expectations affect the transition to new motherhood.

This study is also limited in that only new motherhood is examined. Future research would look into the long-term motherhood role, perhaps via a longitudinal or cross-sectional study, wherein a mother is studied before pregnancy, during pregnancy, when the child is born, and as the child grows until he or she is an adult. This future research would add to the understanding of the motherhood role and its progression over time. Moreover, future studies should compare planned and unplanned pregnancies and how the transition into the motherhood role is different among the two groups.

This study provides a cross-cultural understanding of the transition to new motherhood. This study will hopefully illuminate the societal pressures that are placed on the motherhood role, in both American and French cultures. It is important to understand motherhood as a role and how the transition into new motherhood effects a woman's life. Hopefully, this research will

be used to better understand this transition in order to help alleviate some of the pressures faced by American and French primiparous mothers.

References

- Almqvist, A. (2007). Expectations relating to childcare among French and Swedish families. *Community, Work & Family, 10*(1), 17-38. doi:10.1080/13668800601110736
- Badinter, E. (2013). *The conflict: How overzealous motherhood undermines the status of women*. New York: Picador.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*(6), 1173-1182. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.51.6.1173
- Biddle, B. J. (1979). *Role theory: expectations, identities, and behaviors*. New York: Academic Press.
- Beere, C. A. (1990). *Gender roles: A handbook of tests and measures*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Bohen, H., & Viveros-Long, A. (1981). *Balancing jobs and family life*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Bonet, M., Marchand, L., Kaminski, M., Fohran, A., Betoko, A., Charles, M., & Blondel, B. (2012). Breastfeeding duration, social and occupational characteristics of mothers in the French 'EDEN Mother-Child' cohort. *Maternal and Child Health Journal, 17*(4), 714-722. doi:10.1007/s10995-012-1053-4
- Bornstein, M. H., Tamis-Lemonda, C. S., Pascual, L., Haynes, O. M., Painter, K. M., Galperln, C. Z., & Pecheux, M. (1996). Ideas about parenting in Argentina, France, and the United States. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 19*(2), 347-367. doi:10.1177/016502549601900207

- Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. (1996). Who is this "We"? Levels of collective identity and self representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(1), 83-93.
doi:10.1037//0022-3514.71.1.83
- Callero, P. (1985). Role-Identity Saliency. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 48(3), 203-215.
- Choi, P., Henshaw, C., Baker, S., & Tree, J. (2005). Supermum, superwife, supereverything: performing femininity in the transition to motherhood. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 23(2), 167-180. doi:10.1080/02646830500129487
- Cohen, J. (1992). A power primer. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112(1), 155-159.
doi:10.1037//0033-2909.112.1.155
- Cole, J. H. (1996). "There are only good mothers": the ideological work of women's fertility in France before World War I. *French Historical Studies*, 19(3), 639. doi:10.2307/286639
- Darley, S. A. (1976). Big-time careers for the little woman: A dual-role dilemma. *Journal of Social Issues*, 32(3), 85-98. de Beauvoir, S. (1953). *The second sex*. New York: Knopf.
- Demeis, D. K., & Perkins, H. W. (1996). "Supermoms" of the nineties: homemaker and employed mothers' performance and perceptions of the motherhood role. *Journal of Family Issues*, 17(6), 776-792. doi:10.1177/019251396017006003
- Devereux, E., Bronfenbrenner, U., & Rodgers, R. (1969). Child-Rearing in England and the United States: A Cross-National Comparison. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 31(2), 257-270. doi:10.2307/349942
- Druckerman, P. (2012). *Bringing up bébé: One American mother discovers the wisdom of French parenting*. New York: Penguin Press.

- Duxbury, L., Higgins, C., & Lee, C. (1994). Work-family conflict: A comparison by gender, family type, and perceived control. *Journal of Family Issues*, 15(3), 449- 466.
doi:10.1177/019251394015003006
- Eagly, A. H., & Steffen, V. J. (1984). Gender stereotypes stem from the distribution of women and men into social roles. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46(4), 735-754. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.46.4.735
- Eyer, D. E. (1994). Mother-infant bonding. *Human Nature*, 5(1), 69-94.
doi:10.1007/bf02692192
- Eurostat. (2016, March). Fertility statistics. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Fertility_statistics
- Gash, V. (2009). Sacrificing their careers for their families? An analysis of the penalty to motherhood in Europe. *Social Indicators Research*, 93(3), 569-586. doi:10.1007/s11205-008-9429-y
- Glavin, P., Schieman, S., & Reid, S. (2011). Boundary-spanning work demands and their consequences for guilt and psychological distress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 52(1), 43-57. doi: 10.1177/0022146510395023
- Goode, W. J. (1960). A Theory of Role Strain. *American Sociological Review*, 25(4), 483-496.
doi:10.2307/2092933
- Gorman, K. A., & Fritzsche, B. A. (2002). The good-mother stereotype: stay at home (or wish that you did!). *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, (32)10, 2190-2201.
- Greenhaus, J. H., Collins, K. M., & Shaw, J. D. (2003). The relation between work-family balance and quality of life. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 63(3), 510-531.
doi:10.1016/s0001-8791(02)00042-8

- Hays, S. (1996). *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Jack, D. C. (1991). Silencing the Self: Inner Dialogues and Outer Realities. In T. E. Joiner & J. C. Coyne (Eds.), *The interactional nature of depression: Advances in interpersonal approaches* (221-246). Washington DC: APA.
- Jacques, H. A., & Radtke, H. L. (2012). Constrained by choice: young women negotiate the discourses of marriage and motherhood. *Feminism & Psychology*, 22(4), 443-461. doi:10.1177/0959353512442929
- Johnston-Robledo, I. (2000). From Postpartum Depression to the Empty Nest Syndrome: The Motherhood Mystique Revisited. In J. C. Chrisler, C. Golden, & P. D. Rozee (Eds.), *Lectures on the Psychology of Women* (2nd ed., pp. 129-147). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Krueger, A. B., Kahneman, D., Fischler, C., Schkade, D., Schwarz, N., & Stone, A. A. (2009). Time use and subjective well-being in France and the U.S. *Social Indicators Research*, 93(1), 7-18. doi:10.1007/s11205-008-9415-4
- Laney, E. K., Hall, M. E., Anderson, T. L., & Willingham, M. M. (2015). Becoming a mother: the influence of motherhood on women's identity development. *Identity*, 15(2), 126-145. doi:10.1080/15283488.2015.1023440
- Lastinger, V. (1996). Re-defining motherhood: breast-feeding and the French enlightenment. *Women's Studies*, 25(6), 603-617. doi:10.1080/00497878.1996.9979141
- Lips, H. M. (2017). *A new psychology of women: Gender, culture, and ethnicity* (4th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

- Mauthner, N.S. (1999). "Feelings low and feeling really bad about feeling low": women's experiences of motherhood and postpartum depression. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 40(2), 143-161. doi: 10.1037/h0086833
- Merriam-Webster. Supermom. Retrieved September 25, 2016, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/supermom>
- Morgan, K. J. (2003). The politics of mothers' employment: France in comparative perspective. *World Politics*, 55(2), 259-289.
- Negayama, K., Norimatsu, H., Barratt, M., & Bouville, J. (2012). Japan–France–US comparison of infant weaning from mother's viewpoint. *Journal Of Reproductive And Infant Psychology*, 30(1), 77-91. doi:10.1080/02646838.2011.649473
- Oberman, Y., & Josselson, R. (1996). Matrix of tensions: a model of mothering. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 20(3), 341-359. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1996.tb00304.x
- Ridgeway, C. L., & Correll, S. J. (2004). Motherhood as a status characteristic. *Journal of Social Issues*, 60(4), 683-700. doi:10.1111/j.0022-4537.2004.00380.x
- Russo, N. F. (1976). The motherhood mandate. *Journal of Social Issues*, 32(3), 143-153.
- Russo, N. F. (1979). Overview: Sex roles, fertility and the motherhood mandate. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 4(1), 7-15. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1979.tb00695.x
- Suizzo, M. (2004). French and American mothers' childrearing beliefs: stimulating, responding, and long-term goals. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 35(5), 606-626. doi:10.1177/0022022104268391

Stryker, S. (1968). Identity Salience and Role Performance: The Relevance of Symbolic Interaction Theory for Family Research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 30(4), 558-564. doi:10.2307/349494

Wall, G. (2001). Moral constructions of motherhood in breastfeeding discourse. *Gender & Society*, 15(4), 592-610. doi:10.1177/089124301015004006

Weaver, J. J., & Ussher, J. M. (1997). How motherhood changes life a discourse analytic study with mothers of young children. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 15(1), 51-68. doi:10.1080/02646839708404533

Weiner, L. Y. (1994). Reconstructing Motherhood: The La Leche League in postwar America. *The Journal of American History*, 80(4), 1357-1381. doi:10.2307/2080604

Appendix A

Interview Guide Part I

English

1. How do you feel about being a mother?
2. What do you think it means to be a mother?
3. What do you think your society believes it is to be a mother?
4. What are the cultural expectations of motherhood in your culture?
5. Do you find it difficult to meet those expectations?
6. Do you think you are a good mother?
7. Do you feel adequate in your role as a mother?
8. In the past week, how many times would you say you felt guilty?
9. Do you think your identity has shifted as a result of becoming a mom? If so, how?
10. Are you aware of the term “Supermom?” To what extent do you feel that you need to be a “Supermom?”
11. What, if anything, did other first-time mothers tell you about motherhood?
12. What would you tell other women who are going to become mothers for the first time?
13. What is your favorite thing about being a mother?
14. What is your least favorite part about being a mother?

French

1. Comment vous vous sentez d’être mère?
2. Selon vous, que signifie être mère?
3. À votre avis, que pense la société française de la maternité?
4. Que sont les attentes culturelles de la société française face à la maternité?
5. À votre avis, est-ce que c’est difficile de satisfaire ces attentes?
6. Pensez-vous que vous êtes une bonne mère?
7. Est-ce que vous vous sentez adéquate dans votre rôle de mère?
8. Durant la semaine passée, combien de fois estimez-vous vous être sentie coupable?
9. Est-ce que vous pensez que votre identité a été transformée du fait que vous soyez devenue mère? Si oui, de quelle manière?
10. Est-ce que vous êtes consciente du concept de “Super-maman?” Dans quelle mesure est-ce que vous croyez qu’il est souhaitable d’être une “Super-maman?”
11. Avez-vous discuté de votre rôle de mère avec d’autres femmes qui n’avaient jamais eu d’enfant avant? Si oui, que vous ont-elles dit?
12. Qu’est-ce que vous diriez à une femme qui va devenir mère pour la première fois?
13. Qu’est-ce que vous trouvez le plus agréable dans votre rôle de mère?
14. Qu’est-ce que vous trouvez le moins agréable dans votre rôle de mère?

Appendix B

Interview Guide Part II

English

1. Do you ever feel that you're defined only as a mother?
2. Do you think that society views you as just a mother?
3. Do you feel like you've lost your individuality since becoming a mother?
4. Do you feel like you sometimes don't know who you are anymore?

French

1. Est-ce que vous vous sentez quelquefois comme étant définie uniquement par rapport au fait que vous êtes mère?
2. Pensez-vous que la société vous considère comme une mère avant tout autre rôle?
3. Pensez-vous que vous avez perdu votre individualité en devenant mère?
4. Avez-vous l'impression que vous ne vous connaissez plus? Avez-vous l'impression de ne plus savoir qui vous êtes?

Appendix C

Vignettes

Vignette #1:

English

Jane is a mother of a boy, Billy, who is two years old. She also works full-time as a lawyer. One day, her boss gives Jane a new assignment that needs to be attended to right away. Her boss explains that Jane needs to meet the new client over lunch that day. However, Jane had planned on having her lunch hour free that day so she could go to her son's "baby music" class recital. She tells her boss that she will go to the lunch meeting with the new client, thus missing Billy's recital.

French

Françoise est la mère d'un fils, Maxime, qui a deux ans. En même temps, elle travaille à temps complet comme avocate. Un jour, son chef lui donne une nouvelle tâche à accomplir immédiatement. Son chef lui explique qu'il faut rencontrer un nouveau client pendant le déjeuner ce jour-là. Cependant, Françoise avait eu l'intention d'utiliser son heure de déjeuner pour aller au récital de "musique bébé" de Billy. Elle n'explique pas cela à son patron mais lui dit qu'elle va aller au déjeuner avec le nouveau client. Elle va donc rater le récital de son fils.

Vignette #2

English

Laura, a full-time lawyer, is a mother of a one-year-old girl named Sophia. Laura picks up her daughter from the local playground after she has spent the day with the babysitter while her husband is still at work. As she is playing with her daughter at home, she gets a frantic call from her boss that she needs to completely redo a poorly written legal document before the deadline tomorrow. In a bind, Laura decides to call the intern who works for the law firm to quickly head over to the office and redo the legal document, while Laura stays at home to play with her daughter.

French

Laure, qui travaille à temps complet comme avocate, est mère d'une petite fille d'un an qui s'appelle Marie. Laure va chercher sa fille au terrain de jeu du coin avec sa nounou alors que son mari est encore au boulot. De retour après son travail à la maison et alors qu'elle joue avec sa fille chez elle, elle reçoit un appel téléphonique frénétique de son patron qu'il faut refaire entièrement un bref, qui était mal écrit, avant la date limite du lendemain. Coincée, Laure décide d'appeler sa stagiaire et lui demande d'aller immédiatement au bureau pour réécrire le document pour qu'elle puisse rester chez elle à se détendre avec sa fille.

Appendix D

Questions after vignettes

English

Imagine yourself in this scenario and indicate your response on the scale below:

1 = “not guilty,” 2 = “moderately guilty,” 3 = “guilty,” 4 = “very guilty”

1. To what extent would you feel guilty as the mom in this scenario?
2. To what extent would you feel inadequate as a mother?
3. To what extent would you feel inadequate as an employee?
4. To what extent would you feel inadequate in both roles?

French

Imaginez-vous dans ce scénario-là et indiquez votre réponse selon l'échelle ci-dessous:

1 = “pas coupable,” 2 = “relativement coupable,” 3 = “coupable,” 4 = “très coupable”

1. Dans quelle mesure vous sentiriez-vous coupable si vous étiez la mère dans ce scénario?
2. Dans quelle mesure vous sentiriez-vous incompétente en tant que mère?
3. Dans quelle mesure vous sentiriez-vous incompétente en tant qu'employée?
4. Dans quelle mesure vous sentiriez-vous incompétente, dans les deux cas?

Appendix E

Job-Family Role Strain Scale

English

Please indicate by circling the relevant number next to each statement how often you feel each of the following:

1 = “always,” 2 = “most of the time,” 3 = “some of the time,” 4 = “rarely,” 5 = “never,” and 8 = “not applicable”

1. My job keeps me away from my family too much.
2. I feel I have more to do than I can handle comfortably.
3. I have a good balance between my job and my family time.
4. I wish I had more time to do things for my family.
5. I feel physically drained when I get home from work.
6. I feel emotionally drained when I get home from work.
7. I feel I have to rush to get everything done each day.
8. My time off from work does not match other family members' schedules well.
9. I feel I don't have enough time for myself.
10. I worry that other people at work think my family interferes with my job.
11. I feel more respected than I would if I didn't have a job.
12. I worry whether I should work less and spend more time with my children.
13. I am a better parent because I am not with my children all day.
14. I find enough time for the children.
15. I worry about how my kids are when I am working.
16. I have as much patience with my children as I would like.
17. I am comfortable with the arrangements for my children while I am working.
18. Making arrangements for my children while I work involves a lot of effort.
19. I worry that other people feel I should spend more time with my children.

French

Veillez indiquer en encerclant le numéro pertinent à côté de chaque énoncé à quelle fréquence vous vous sentez chacun des éléments suivants:

1 = “toujours,” 2 = “la plupart du temps,” 3 = “parfois/de temps en temps,” 4 = “rarement,” 5 = “jamais,” et 8 = “pas applicable”

1. Mon travail me tient trop à l'écart de ma famille.
2. J'ai le sentiment d'avoir plus à faire que ce que je suis capable de faire.
3. J'ai un bon équilibre entre mon travail et mon temps en famille.
4. J'aimerais avoir plus de temps pour faire des choses pour et avec ma famille.
5. Je me sens épuisée physiquement quand je rentre chez moi du travail.
6. Je me sens épuisée émotionnellement quand je rentre chez moi du travail.
7. J'ai constamment l'impression qu'il faut me presser pour arriver à tout faire chaque jour.

8. Mes heures de travail ne s'accordent pas bien avec l'emploi du temps des autres membres de ma famille.
9. Je pense que je n'ai pas assez de temps pour moi-même.
10. Je m'inquiète que les autres employés croient que ma famille interfère avec mon travail.
11. Je me sens plus estimée que si je n'avais pas d'emploi.
12. Je me demande souvent si je ne devrais pas moins travailler et passer plus de temps avec mes enfants.
13. Je suis une meilleure mère parce que je ne suis pas avec mes enfants toute la journée.
14. Je trouve assez de temps pour m'occuper de mes enfants.
15. Je m'inquiète de mes enfants quand je suis au travail.
16. J'ai autant de patience avec mes enfants de garderie de que je veux.
17. Je suis confortable avec les arrangements de garderie pour mes enfants pendant que je travaille.
18. Faire les arrangements pour mes enfants pendant que je travaille me demande beaucoup d'efforts.
19. Je m'inquiète que les autres ne pensent qu'ils doivent passer plus de temps avec mes enfants.

Appendix F

Motherhood Salience Scale

English

Please rate the following items based on how much you agree with the statement, ranging from: 1 = “strongly disagree,” to 9 = “strongly agree.”

1. Motherhood is something I rarely even think about.
2. I would feel a loss if I were not a mother.
3. I really don't have any clear feelings about motherhood.
4. For me, being a mother means more than just mothering.
5. Motherhood is an important part of who I am.

French

Veillez évaluer les phrases suivantes en fonction de votre concordance avec la déclaration, allant de: 1 = “fortement en désaccord,” à 9 = “fortement en accord.”

1. La maternité est quelque chose à laquelle je pense rarement.
2. Je ressentirais une carence si je n'étais pas mère.
3. Je n'ai pas des sentiments simples face à la maternité.
4. Pour moi, être mère, c'est plus que simplement répondre aux besoins de mes enfants.
5. La maternité est une partie importante de qui je suis.