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## Understanding how women make meaning of their multiple roles : a cognitive-developmental analysis.

Michelle C. Stefanisko  
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UNDERSTANDING HOW WOMEN MAKE MEANING  
OF THEIR MULTIPLE ROLES:  
A COGNITIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL ANALYSIS

A Dissertation Presented

by

MICHELLE C. STEFANISKO

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 1997

School of Education

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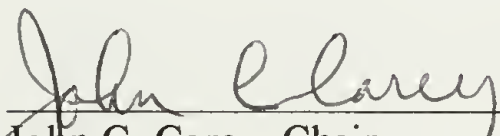
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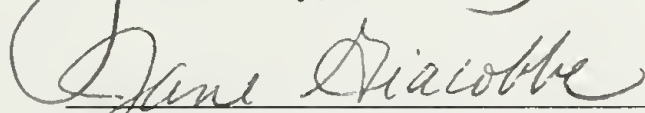
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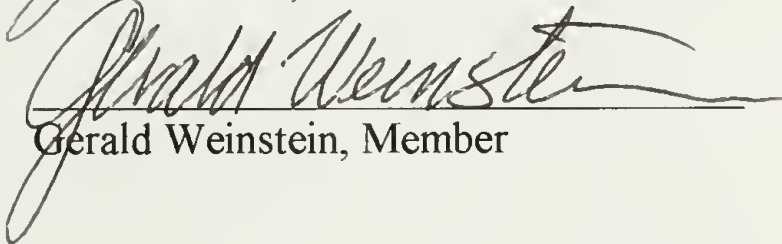
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## ABSTRACT

# UNDERSTANDING HOW WOMEN MAKE MEANING OF THEIR MULTIPLE ROLES: A COGNITIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL ANALYSIS

SEPTEMBER 1997

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There are growing numbers of women in the workforce, with increasing numbers of working mothers. The numbers of women with multiple role responsibilities, such as wife, mother and paid worker, is on the rise. To date, the multiple role literature reveals seemingly contradictory findings in regard to the impact of women's different role experiences on their overall well-being. Some suggest that the more roles that a woman occupies, the greater the likelihood that she will experience the harmful effects of role conflict, stress, depression, and even physical illness. Others suggest that as women's number of roles increases, she may develop internal resources to 'buffer' against any potential negatives. Hence, these researchers find increasing roles related to higher self-esteem. The specific findings of the multiple role literature will be explicated in the review. The purpose of this study is to provide a phenomenological approach in order to derive meaning from the apparent discrepancy in the multiple role literature.



Eighteen working mothers, between the ages of 35 and 50, volunteered to participate in in-depth interviews about their role experiences. Each of these women have been in the roles of wife, mother, and paid worker for at least five years. These middle-class, Caucasian women have at least two children living in their homes. Through the interview conversations, these women described what it means to be a multiple role woman, identified the benefits and costs of their life roles, and discussed how they negotiate and manage their role responsibilities. A cognitive developmental framework, Self-Knowledge Theory, was used to explore the processes and meanings of women's role experiences. The Experience Recall Test (ERT2) combined with an in-depth interview was used to elicit how certain women make meaning of their multiple role experiences.

Results were analyzed both thematically and developmentally, with particular attention to the influential variables identified in the multiple roles literature. This data supports the premise that the perceived quality of the multiple role experience is related to whether the perceived outcomes will be more positive or negative. This project also suggests that self-knowledge capacity impacts how people experience, understand and describe the quality of their role experiences. As the stage of self-knowledge increases, the quality of role experiences is described with greater personal agency, more breadth and depth, and more insight into the relationship between inner states and outside experiences. Higher self-knowledge stage is associated with a greater utilization of tools for managing role conflict, a lower frequency of reported distress, and a more sophisticated, systematic approach to negotiating conflict with their partners.

The findings of this project informs future interventions for the growing numbers of working women. Employee assistance programs, mentoring programs, family support services, higher education support services, and other resources for multiple role women benefit from the findings of this study.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Problem

There are growing numbers of women in the workforce, with increasing numbers of working mothers. The numbers of women with multiple role responsibilities, such as wife, mother and paid worker, is on the rise. To date, the multiple role literature reveals seemingly contradictory findings in regard to the impact of women's different role experiences on their overall well-being. Some suggest that the more roles that a woman occupies, the greater the likelihood that she will experience the harmful effects of role conflict, stress, depression, and even physical illness. Others suggest that as women's number of roles increases, she has more internal resources to 'buffer' against any potential negatives. Hence, these researchers find increasing roles related to higher self-esteem. The specific findings of the multiple role literature will be explicated in the review. The purpose of this study is to provide a phenomenological approach in order to derive meaning from the apparent discrepancy in the multiple role literature. A cognitive developmental framework will be used to explore the processes and meanings of women's role experiences. The findings of this project will inform future interventions for the growing numbers of working women. Employee assistance programs, mentoring programs, family support services and other resources for working mothers will benefit from the findings of this study.

Many women occupy the roles of wife, parent and paid worker in our society. In 1988, more than half (56%) of women workers were married. Single parents are

prevalent in the workforce among women as 1 in every 5 mothers (4 million) in the labor force maintains her own family. In fact, 67% of all single mothers were in the labor force. In reference to working mothers, both married and unmarried, two-thirds (65%) of all women with children under 18 were in the labor force; 56% of mothers of children under age 6 were in the labor force; 74% of mothers of 6-17 year old children were in labor force (National Commission on Working Women of Wider Opportunities for Women, 1991). The trend of working mothers is on the rise as compared to the level of participation in 1982 when about 55% of all women with children under 18 were in the labor force and 46% of mothers of children under age 6 were in the labor force (Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor, 1982).

In order to more fully understand the nature of women's labor force participation, it is important to consider the career development of women. The process of women's career progress is affected by numerous complex and interacting factors. For example, women's career development is frequently less contiguous; they experience many more interruptions than men. These interruptions frequently surround the sequencing of marriage, family and career. Women's labor force participation, as well as their overall life path, reflects numerous patterns of involvement which incorporate these factors. On the other hand, men tend to proceed along their career path in more of a linear manner, with fewer diversions from their career progress (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987).

Many explanations are offered for the particular career process and career outcomes that women experience. Explications reflect sociological, political, physical,

psychological, economic and even historical perspectives. Within these various approaches, the reasons for these phenomena are attributed to both external and internal factors. Models including background characteristics, (e.g. academic ability, physical ability, race), environmental influences, (e.g. culture, socialization, discrimination, sexism), and psychological variables (e.g. self concept, motivation, self-efficacy) are presented in various forms to account for these differences. Research suggests that the interaction of these external and internal factors is more complex for women than for men (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Some of these complexities include the conflicts caused by multiple role experiences, the sequencing of life roles, the complicating influences of discrimination and sexual harassment, to name a few. Crosby (1991), in her review of the multiple role literature elaborating upon women's experiences, described the process as “juggling” whereby women manage all of the complexities that these life roles bring. Scholars seem to agree that these interacting influences contribute to the complexity of women's career development and their subsequent participation in the workforce.

With the growing numbers of women handling a combination of roles such as parent, spouse and worker, studies addressing the dynamics of multiple role negotiation is warranted. Much of the multiple role literature defines the quality of the multiple role experience as being a global construct such as: 'marital satisfaction', 'familial satisfaction' or 'happiness'. However, a phenomenological approach allows for the participants to describe and define what is meant by the quality of their multiple role



experiences. Enriching our understanding of women's multiple role experiences will better inform possible interventions for enhancing women's development.

### Purpose of the Study and Significance

In light of the complexity of women's career progress and the nature of women's workforce participation, an attempt will be made to investigate and understand these phenomena. The complexity of these interacting influences necessitates a focused approach. The population under examination in this project is multiple role women. The impact of multiple roles upon women has been widely studied, suggesting a relationship to mental and physical health outcomes (Crosby, 1987). The quantity and quality of women's multiple role experiences have been related to psychological well-being, happiness, depression, and stress, to name a few. The interpretation of these empirical studies is confusing in that some studies suggest that multiple roles are self-enhancing for women while others purport that multiple roles tend to result in negative consequences such as higher role conflict, role strain, depression, and distress. To date, an explanation for these seeming contradictions is unavailable.

The author believes that by listening to the experiences of multiple role women, a better understanding of the impact of multiple roles will come. Several classic qualitative projects have listened to women's voices about issues pertinent to women's development (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1979, 1982; Josselson, 1987; Mercer, Nichols, & Doyle, 1989). However, the few qualitative

studies that do explore women's multiple role experiences tend to focus on a particular aspect of their multiple role experiences, such as role conflict or stress.

Phenomenological studies which examine how women understand and respond to the complexities of their life role experiences with a more open-ended focus would enrich our understanding of how these multiple role experiences impact women's lives. Borrowing from the field of social cognitive development, this study maintains that people's cognitive capacities affect the way that they make sense of and respond to their life situations. Hence, understanding and identifying the ways that women experience their multiple roles may clarify our understanding of the current empirical multiple role literature. To add to the existing body of knowledge and to fill the gap in the existing literature, a semi-structured interview will be utilized to gather information and insight into the multiple role experience.

### Research Questions

The primary questions guiding this study are the following:

1. How do women describe themselves in the role of wife, mother and paid worker? How do they feel about the roles that they play? What does it mean to be a multiple role woman?
2. Do women see their multiple role experiences as enhancing, restrictive, or a combination of the two? What do they see as self-enhancing? What do they see as self-restrictive?
3. How do women manage their multiple roles? What resources facilitate their role management? What hinders this process? How do these women negotiate their role conflict?

4. Can a social cognitive developmental schema, specifically Self-Knowledge stages (Weinstein & Alschuler, 1985) explain the variability found in the answers to the questions above? Can any patterns of response be discerned that seems related to social cognitive capacity?

To examine these research questions, certain methodological considerations pertain to this project. By selecting a qualitative approach, the data will enhance the existing multiple role literature as this approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the meaning and perception of the specific factors identified in the multiple role literature as impacting the quality of these role experiences. With the current discrepancies in the literature concerning the overall impact of multiple roles upon overall well being, a phenomenological approach provides an opportunity to understand these apparent contradictions more fully. In addition, the construct of multiple role quality will be more clearly understood through this qualitative approach. These issues are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2 but warrant attention in discussing the purpose and significance of this study.

For the purposes of this study, the term, "multiple role woman," refers to a woman who currently holds the roles of wife, mother and paid worker. The multiple role women in this study are considered "established" in that they have had at least five years experience within each of these roles. The rationale for defining these terms in this manner is delineated in later sections. Social cognitive development refers to understanding the development of how people think about their social environment. This field describes the processes by which people learn to understand, explain, monitor, and change their interactions with others. Self-Knowledge Development



Theory is one framework within the field of social cognitive development which is particularly applicable for this study, as it attends to how people understand the links between their self-understanding and their interactions with others in their environment. This model is outlined in greater detail in later sections.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews literature on multiple role women, with particular attention to studies on role occupancy, role involvement and role quality, and the psychological factors influencing the quality of multiple role experiences. The second part of this review focuses on literature which explores women's development through qualitative methods. It looks at studies and clinical writing which use developmental approaches to explain women's identity, cognitive meaning making, life cycle transitions, and self-knowledge.

#### Research on Multiple Role Women

In light of the current and anticipated pictures of women's participation in the workforce, the focus will now turn to the particular issues of multiple role women. This section examines the complexities of women's personal and career development with particular emphasis on the plight of multiple role women.

#### Definition

For the purposes of this paper, multiple role women are defined as women who occupy the positions of spouse, parent and paid worker. This definition is the most widely used definition of multiple role women. Although this definition omits working single parents, working parents in alternative relationships (unmarried, lesbian, etc.), and women involved in roles other than the combination listed above, this paper defines multiple role women in this manner for the sake of clarity. This restricted definition of

multiple role women poses obvious limitations in generalization. Since this paper proposes to explore how multiple role women understand and experience their life roles, a more widely investigated definition has been chosen.

In investigating the literature examining multiple role women, some psychologists and sociologists have emphasized the negative effects of multiple roles while others have focused upon the positive effects of combining roles. Thus, it is important to understand the frames of reference utilized when discussing the impact of multiple roles upon the women. Literature describes the influence of multiple roles in terms of the impact of role occupancy, role involvement, and role quality. For this reason, the review of multiple role literature focuses upon these particular approaches.

### Role Occupancy Literature

Early research focused upon multiple role occupancy and its effects upon mental health, revealing two opposing views. Some researchers believed that an increase in the number of roles would be harmful to a person's mental health (Fowlkes, 1987; Goode, 1960; Hall, 1975; Valdez & Gutek, 1984). Goode (1960) put forth this "scarcity" hypothesis purporting that with each role comes a set level of socially imposed obligations which, when combined, impairs a person's well-being (i.e., higher levels of depression, distress) due to the finite amount of human energy available to meet these prescribed obligations. This phenomenon is called role conflict or role strain. In contrast to this view, others suggest that the effects of multiple roles to be potentially beneficial (Coleman, Antonucci, & Andelmann, 1987; Gove & Zeiss, 1987; Marks, 1977; Repetti, Matthews & Rodin, 1989). This "expansion" hypothesis



(Marks, 1977) emphasizes the benefits rather than the costs of multiple role involvement which, in this perspective, encompasses features such as: status, privileges, increased self-esteem, and the ability to trade off undesirable components of roles.

The literature which approached multiple role experiences from a role occupancy perspective examined mental and / or physical health outcomes and the relationship between role occupancy and role conflict. Were the number of roles that a person occupied related to mental health issues (e.g., depression, happiness) or physical health variables (e.g., distress)? As role occupancy increased, did role conflict levels also? Several empirical studies examined the relatedness of these factors (Coleman et al., 1987; Gove & Zeiss, 1987; Hall, 1975; Repetti et al., 1989; Valdez & Gutek, 1984).

Gove and Zeiss (1987) stated that role occupancy among men and women was clearly related to happiness; as the number of roles increased, so did reported levels of happiness. Coleman et al. (1987) reported that multiple role occupancy enhanced well-being for both men and women. These studies clearly supported the "expansion" hypothesis (Marks, 1977).

In another study supporting this hypothesis, Repetti et al. (1989) reviewed the empirical evidence investigating the effects of paid employment on women's mental and physical health, focusing primarily on studies with longitudinal data for representative samples of women. The authors concluded that the net effect of employment on women's health was not negative. In fact, unmarried women and married women with favorable attitudes toward employment appeared to reap positive health outcomes

through participation in employment. These studies emphasized the impact of role occupancy and environmental characteristics, such as the type of occupation, job characteristics, and work-related stressors, upon women's health outcomes.

Role occupancy literature also addressed the concept of role conflict. According to the role conflict phenomena, commitment to multiple roles led to either incompatible or excessive role expectations which resulted in physical or mental exhaustion (Fowlkes, 1987). Women were proposed to be particularly vulnerable to the role conflict phenomena, since women tended to spend more time in combined work and home activity than men (Berk & Berk, 1979; Pleck, 1985). Several researchers suggested that the more roles that a women had, such as spouse, parent and paid worker, the greater the likelihood role overload or role conflict existed (Hall, 1975). Valdez and Gutek (1984) suggested that the interdependence between home life and work life is particularly salient for women due to their greater family responsibilities.

Since women still tend to handle a greater amount of family responsibilities, the integration of home life and work life is particularly critical for women. The greater the level of impact of responsibilities at work combined with those at home increased the potential for role overload or role conflict. Negative outcomes from role overload and role conflict include depression and distress.

Valdez and Gutek (1984) examined the role quantity impact on women's mental health outcomes in a telephone survey of 827 professional women in Los Angeles county. They hypothesized that women in professional or managerial jobs might avoid

possible role conflict and / or role overload by remaining unmarried, or, if married, be childless or have few children. Thus, women in higher occupational levels were expected to have a greater percentage of single-role women (paid-worker alone) than women in lower occupational levels. Their survey focused specifically on the level of occupational status (professional, managerial, clerical / skilled, semi-skilled / unskilled, and service) and type of familial circumstance (married, unmarried; many children, few children, and childless). The data did not support their hypothesis in that the majority of women in professional and managerial occupations were married; in fact, at a greater level than the women with other occupational status.

These researchers assumed that as the number of roles increase, the level of role strain, role conflict or role overload also increased (Fowlkes, 1987; Goode, 1960; Hall, 1975; Valdez & Gutek, 1984). The focus of these studies was on the quantity of the roles, not the quality of those role experiences. However, some studies discounted the scarcity hypothesis in regard to role conflict (Crosby, 1987; Greenhaus, Bedeian, & Mossholder, 1987; Pleck, 1985). Among employed wives, the amount of time spent in work and family roles, either separately or combined, did not have strong or consistent effects on family adjustment or well-being (Pleck, 1985). Crosby (1987) found that the self-reports of employed mothers stated that their multiple roles were often not experienced as more stressful than the lives experienced by women with fewer roles. Neither of these studies controlled for the educational level of their sample, which may have confounded the results of their studies. Additional research is needed in this area to clarify the relationship between quantity of multiple roles and role strain.



## Role Involvement and Role Quality

Later research determined that it was not the occupancy of the role per se, rather the quality of that role experience which was important. Thus, the quality of the multiple role experiences could mediate any harmful effects created by role strain and / or role conflict, etc. (Barnett, 1990; Baruch & Barnett, 1986, 1987; Crosby, 1987; DiBenedetto & Tittle, 1990; Gove & Zeiss, 1987; Piechowski, 1992; Verbrugge, 1987).

A majority of recent studies supported the expansion perspective, in that for both men and women, as the number of roles increase, the level of psychological well-being became enhanced (Crosby, 1983; Epstein, 1983; Verbrugge, 1982). However, within these studies, the quality of the role experiences, and its subsequent influence upon well-being, was not examined. Baruch and Barnett (1986) examined women's multiple role involvement and the quality of their experiences in relation to psychological well-being. The sample consisted of women who occupied one of four family role patterns: never-married, married without children, married with children, and divorced with children. Half of the married women and all of the never-married and divorced women were employed in equal numbers of high-, medium-, and low-prestige occupations. Non-employed women were stratified along the prestige level in accordance with their husband's occupation. Psychological well-being was measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the depression subscale of the Hopkins Symptom Checklist, and a pleasure scale consisting of three standard single-item measures of happiness, satisfaction, and optimism. A role quality measurement was created based

upon interviews of 72 women to identify rewarding and distressing aspects of each role they occupied.

The responses of this representative group of women were utilized to construct spouse, parent, and paid worker scales yielding reward, concern, and balance scores, the latter used as an index of the quality of each role experience. Results of the regression analyses indicated that family income was a significant predictor of all three well-being indices. However, the only role occupancy variable that was a significant predictor of well-being when age, income and education were controlled was paid worker, which predicted self-esteem. All three of the balance scores were significant predictors of self-esteem and depression, and the balance scores of wife and paid worker were significant predictors of pleasure. This study supports the view that it is the quality of the woman's role experiences, and not her role occupancy, that is a significant predictor of her well-being.

An important methodological strength of this study, as compared to all others in this review, is that the role quality measure was developed from 72 in-depth interviews with women. Women's perspectives about the benefits and drawbacks of each of life's roles were incorporated into the survey design. Other studies tend to utilize measures developed from exclusively male or mixed samples or rely upon "expert consultation" to design their measurement tools.

A related study explored both role occupancy and role quality in regard to reported mental and physical well-being. Gender differences in physical health outcomes were found in regard to the quality of the role experiences. Women who

perceived low quality of their role experiences were at greater risk for poor health, regardless of the number of roles they occupied. In fact, women with fewer roles and less positive feelings about their lives, or lower quality of role experiences, suffered poorer health than men (Verbrugge, 1987).

Several studies cited the mediating influences of the perceived quality of the multiple role experience upon women's mental and physical health outcomes (Baruch & Barnett, 1987; Gove & Zeiss, 1987; Repetti, 1987; Repetti, 1988; Steil & Turetsky, 1987). Repetti (1988) found that married working women who perceived a more equitable distribution of household responsibilities were less likely to experience depression and poor social relations at work than women who did not experience spousal support. In a related study, Gove and Zeiss (1987) found that for men, the fact of being married was a greater predictor of male happiness than female happiness. However, for women it was the nature of the marriage, such as perceived spousal support and intimacy, which was a stronger predictor of happiness for women than men. Thus, gender differences emerged in that the quality of the marital relationship was related to mental health outcomes for women, but the role occupancy alone was related to male happiness. The quality of the multiple role experience, defined as marital and familial satisfaction, enhanced multiple role women's mental health in a related study (Steil & Turetsky, 1987).

Another study explored the influence of perceived social support at work on women's overall well-being (Repetti, 1987). Here it was found that the perceived quality of the group social climate at work was related to depression, thus the higher



the perceived social support at work, the lower the incidence of depression among working women. Baruch and Barnett (1987) found that working mothers who receive a great deal of spouse support feel positive about their spouses and their lives. For mothers, the quality of their roles mattered more in regard to their well-being, than the number of roles or the amount of stress encountered. These studies suggested that the perceived quality of family role experiences (spouse, parent) and the worker role experience were related to women's physical and psychological well-being.

In examining the influence of perceived home-career conflict upon the quality of women's multiple role experiences, it is important to understand how home-career conflict functions. Two views for understanding this issue are proposed, the rational view and the gender role perspective (Gutek et al., 1991). The rational view suggests that perceived conflict is related linearly to the total amount of time spent in paid and family work. Thus, the more time one spends on either paid work, family work, or a combination of the two, the person's perceptions of home-career conflict levels will increase. A differing view, the gender role perspective, suggests that gender affects perceived home-career conflict directly or as a moderator of the relationship between hours and perceived conflict. Thus, additional hours of work in one's own sex role domain (such as more housework hours for a woman or more paid-work hours for a man) ought to be felt as less of an imposition than additional hours of work in the other's sex role domain.

Gutek et al. (1991) examined both the rational view and gender role perspective in understanding home-career conflict among two separate samples of professional



employed people with families. Although their results supported aspects of both views, they concluded that the level of perceived home-career conflict is not simply linearly related to the number of hours expended in a particular role. Rather, the level of perceived work-family conflict differs in a predictable manner, that is, in accordance with sex role expectations. Apparently the quantity of time devoted to women's multiple roles is not necessarily an indicator of the quality of her role experiences, but her perception of her multiple role experiences may be influenced by her sex role expectations.

Numerous psychological variables contribute to the quality of the multiple role experience. Likewise, various psychological influences affect women's career development, particularly the nature of women's participation in the workforce. Many studies suggest that the quality of the multiple role experience serves as a buffer against the harmful impact of role conflict. However, most of these studies define the quality of the multiple role experience as being a global construct such as: 'marital satisfaction', 'familial satisfaction' or 'happiness'. These studies do not ask their participants to describe what is meant by quality of life. In addition, these studies utilize quantitative measures to examine these issues. These approaches assume that women ascribe the same meaning to these testing protocols as the sample from which these measures were drawn. However, as Gilligan (1982) and many others afterward maintain, the samples utilized in most psychological research are comprised of white, middle-class men and therefore, do not accurately reflect the experience of at least half of the population.

Thus, qualitative research which attempts to understand how women describe, respond to, and experience their life roles is warranted in order to enrich the research to date.

### Research on Meaning Making and Development

This part of the review begins with a discussion of qualitative research on women's development. Several studies which have examined aspects of women's development are reviewed. After acknowledging Gilligan's (1979, 1982) pioneering impact on psychological theory, a review follows including research on women's identity development, cognitive epistemological perspectives, and life cycle transitions. It continues with a description of a social cognitive model and how this model could be used as a framework for exploring how women make meaning of their multiple role experiences.

The field of social cognitive development, which emerged in the early 1960's from Piaget's work on the cognitive development of children, elucidates how people describe or make meaning of their social experiences. Social cognition offers a framework for understanding the cognitive capacity of humans which allows individuals to have different explanations for the same social event. Cognitive developmentalists identify progressive stages or epistemological positions of understanding the complexities of the thought process.

### Qualitative Studies of Women's Development

The challenge that the current conceptualization of moral and cognitive development must be reframed in order to 'fit' women's developmental experiences was first illustrated in the work of Carol Gilligan (1977, 1982). By listening to girls and

women resolve serious moral dilemmas, Gilligan constructed a new model of organizing moral development which centers on the notions of responsibility and care. This conceptualization contrasts sharply with the models described by Piaget (1965) and Kohlberg (1984), which were based on the moral development of boys and men.

Gilligan's (1977, 1982) work on women's development reframes developmental models and gives women's and girls' voices a new prominence in psychological research. Her work maintains the importance of connection in how women view themselves and subsequently shows how this central theme informs women's ways of approaching life. Through extensive clinical interviews of women and men, girls and boys, Gilligan continues to refine her understanding of human development, with particular attention to voice and language as integral to the understanding of the psychological processes of a relational psychology.

Another challenge to the conceptualization of identity development was voiced by Ruthellen Josselson (1987). Her longitudinal research, grounded in Erikson's theory of identity development, suggests that widely accepted hallmark of adulthood, independence and autonomy, are not appropriate markers for women. Communion, connection, relational embeddedness, spirituality, and affiliation are most appropriate to identity development in women. Josselson (1987) interviewed 60 women who were seniors in college and, twelve years later conducted follow-up interviews with over half of her original sample to yield an extensive understanding of women's identity development.



Using Marcia's (1966) operationalization of Erikson's stages of identity development, Josselson identified four different pathways women follow as they shape their identities. The "purveyors of the heritage" or identity disclosure type are women who carry their self-definitions into adulthood without going through the crisis and reassessment associated with adolescence. The "pavers of the way" or identity achievement women go through a period of crisis during which they independently commit themselves to a way of being. "Daughters of the crisis" or moratorium type are those women who experience a prolonged identity crisis, which may or may not be resolved later on in life. These women are struggling to make commitments but have not yet found the right ones for them. Finally, the "lost and sometimes found" or identity diffusion type are women who are unable to make identity decisions and experience neither crisis nor commitment. These women are drifting, hence avoiding the identity-formation task.

Josselson's (1987) work suggests that women differ, not just from men but from each other, in their approaches to forming relationships, making decisions about family and children, pursuing careers, developing religious beliefs and world views, and more. Moreover, the aspects most salient to identity formation in women have been overlooked by psychological research and theory. Traditionally, the growth of independence and autonomy have been stressed rather than broadening the process of identity formation to include those constructs (e.g., communion, connection, relational embeddedness, spirituality, affiliation) appropriate for women.



An extensive qualitative research project which examined the cognitive development of women was that of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986). They interviewed 135 women with a range of experiences in an intensive interview/case study approach which placed the women in a series of "epistemological positions." This exploratory project yields a developmentally oriented framework for explaining what was important about life and learning from the participants point of view.

They grouped the perspectives they identified into five major epistemological categories: "silence," "received knowledge," "subjective knowledge," "procedural knowledge," and "constructed knowledge." The first position, "silence" included women who could not describe, or experienced extreme difficulty in describing, themselves. These women find no vantage point outside of the self that allowed them to be introspective or self-evaluative.

The second category, "received knowledge" was comprised of women who were capable of gaining knowledge for expert outside sources, such as professors or medical doctors. However, these women were incapable of viewing themselves as creators of knowledge. Hence, the only way that these women could talk about themselves was by repeating what others said about them.

Women who were identified at the third position of "subjective knowledge" described the source of truth and knowledge to come from personal experience or intuition. Subjectivist women shift away from owning the perspective of others to define themselves and, subsequently, experience "a wrenching away of the familiar contexts and relationships within which the old identity has been embedded (p.81)."

These women, even though they experienced fluctuations in their sense of who they were, value this instability as a sign of openness to change. They are able to watch and listen to themselves as they experience these changes, but are not yet able to articulate to others about their perceptions of the world.

"Procedural knowers" are invested in learning and applying objective strategies for obtaining and communicating knowledge. These women embrace the pursuit of knowledge as a conscious, deliberate, systematic, rational process. These women maintain that you cannot "just know;" rather truth is learned through careful objective observation and analysis. Finally, the women who were at the last position of "constructed knowledge" valued both subjective and objective strategies for gaining knowledge. Moreover, these women viewed all knowledge as contextual and experienced themselves as creators of knowledge.

An unexpected finding of their work was that the women who shared an epistemological position tended to have commonalities in family history. These distinctive family patterns which were common to each position were illustrated most clearly in the familial "politics of talk." Families tended to have similar rules of communication and values about the learning process depending upon epistemological position. This suggests that certain environmental qualities nurture and constrain the cognitive development of women.

Another group of researchers studied the transitions in the life cycle by gathering a life history of 80 women who ranged in age from 60 to 95 years of age, the average age being 73.5 for the total sample (Mercer, Nichols, & Doyle, 1989). Life

history, or naturalistic memory research, allowed an emphasis on the interrelatedness of the person with the social and cultural environment across the life span. Women were asked to describe what they remembered about each period of life, beginning with their earliest recollections, then moving to school-age and teenage years, and proceeding through each decade of life to the present. Within each period, women were asked to describe the events in their communities and the world at that time, the people who were important to them, their role models and mentors, and the transitions or turning points in their lives. Each woman was queried about the specific transition from childhood to adulthood.

Mercer et al., (1989) suggest that women tend to experience developmental periods at later ages and in sequences that were much more irregular than those reported by Levinson and colleagues (1978) for men. Although there was some consistency in parallel age periods for major developmental transitions, women tended to focus on different aspects of their lives than men. The five developmental stages which emerged from their sample include: launching into adulthood (ages 16 - 25), age-30 leveling (ages 26 - 30), age-40 liberating (ages 36 - 40), regeneration / redirection (ages 61 - 65), and age-80 creativity / destructiveness.

In regard to the impact of transitions upon women's development, the opportunities and challenges that were experienced by women between the ages of 21 and 30 seemed to set the course for the majority of the women's lives (Mercer et al., 1989). Events that occurred during school age and teenage years were less critical. Secondly, the women's responses to transitions varied, depending upon their stage of



identity development as defined by Marcia (1966) and Josselson (1987). As it was with Josselson's sample, it was not the roles enacted in the women's lives that differed so greatly by the view that they held of life, as it was the meaning that they ascribed to these life experiences.

This study looks further at the ways in which cognitive development may be linked to the experiences of role-conflict among multiple role women. The multiple role literature yields opposing interpretations of the impact of these role experiences. Some researchers believed that an increase in the number of roles would be associated with higher role strain or role conflict, potentially impairing a person's well-being (e.g., higher levels of depression, distress). In contrast, others suggest that the effects of multiple roles to be potentially beneficial. However, in the unfolding of the multiple role literature which encompasses role occupancy, role involvement and role quality, and the psychological factors influencing role quality, a serious methodological flaw appears. Implicit in much of the research on multiple role women is that women ascribe similar value and meaning to the numerous psychological factors in question. However, as the qualitative studies on women's development suggest, women have developed their identities differently, have different "ways of knowing" and experience life cycle transitions in a distinct manner. Although there are clear developmental parallels between men and women, there are also some unique facets of experience which suggest women make meaning of their life experiences differently. Not only are there differences between men and women, but also among women. In order to understand how women make sense of their multiple role experiences, with particular



attention to how they understand and experience role conflict, a social cognitive developmental model, Self-Knowledge Development (Weinstein & Alschuler, 1985) will be used.

### Self-Knowledge Development Theory

Self-Knowledge Development Theory (SKDT) by Weinstein and Alschuler (1985) is a structural developmental theory which describes four stages of self-knowledge. They maintain that the way in which people develop knowledge about themselves within the physical and social world informs the natural development of people's interactions in world. Self-knowledge is defined as "the ability to describe internal experiences as fully as possible, to anticipate internal responses as precisely as possible, and to manage that experience as intentionally and effectively as possible" (Weinstein and Alschuler, 1985, p. 19). A person's self-statements are examined in accordance with this structural model of cognitive development and responses are coded according to developmental self-knowledge stages. Each stage is not necessarily indicative of a person's permanent or fixed capacity or level of self-knowledge, rather the potential for higher (or lower) stage responses is influenced through additional life experiences. By cultivating self-knowledge development, through either education or counseling, one can promote development and foster human potential (Weinstein & Alschuler, 1985).

They identified systematic, developmental differences in people's self-knowledge by administering the Unforgettable Experience Recall (UER) to a diverse sample of 201 men and women between the ages of 7 and 76. The researchers

purposely collected a sample equally distributed between both genders. The UER, and the most recent self-knowledge instrument, the Experience Recall Test-2 (ERT2), ask the participant to choose an unforgettable experience they remembered, describe it, and answer questions about it which elicit information about self-understanding. They attempted to discern the underlying forms of the statements supplied through the exercise in order to identify those statements that might indicate different developmental operations and structures. Through careful systematic analysis, they identified four developmental stages: Elemental, Situational, Pattern, and Transformational. A revised set of Self-Knowledge stages, which included sub-stage descriptions for both Situational and Pattern stages, was created in 1991 (Weinstein, June 16, 1994). Gender differences did not appear according to developmental stage.

The first stage, Elemental Self-Knowledge, is characterized by narratives which are expressed in a fragmented, list-like fashion which lacks continuity and completeness. The elements of the story are not connected in deliberate ways which suggest causation; rather the information shared may be superficial in nature. For example, "I was riding on my bike. I fell off and got 10 stitches. There was a fire in the house across the street."

The second stage, Situational Self-Knowledge, demonstrates the person's ability to express a more organized description of a memorable event. Although the general phenomena described is primarily external, the individual may begin to provide global information about inner states. However, the situation is attributed to causing the

response or inner feeling, "That book made me happy because it was about a romantic wedding."

The Situational Self-Knowledge stage has recently been divided into two substages, Situational 1 and Situational 2 (Weinstein, June 16, 1994). In Situation 1, people can link internal states with external situations and behavior; "when that big bully was walking toward me, I was holding on frantically to my bicycle... I was terrified." Further, people can make links between causation and actions, and between actions and inner states. However, they are not able to relate all of these components to a clear, singular coherent event. At Situation 2, people can now coordinate all of the above components into a coherent event. "The first time I ever confronted someone was that bully." "It was the beginning of my becoming an adult."

The third stage, Internal Pattern Self-Knowledge, allows the knower to describe an internal response that is consistent across situations or social contexts, for instance, "Whenever I'm in over my head and need help, I don't tell anybody. I don't want them to think I'm incapable or a fake." At this stage, people make predictive statements about how they would react in a given situation, knowing what they know about their own internal dispositions.

The Internal Pattern stage has been divided into two substages, Pattern 1 and Pattern 2 (Weinstein, June 16, 1994). At Pattern 1, the person can relate two or more situations or one class of situations to a consistent set of internal responses. However, the descriptive detail is generally global and undifferentiated and there is no reference to internal intrapsychic conflict or self-responsibility for the patterned responses. At

Pattern 2, evidence of internal conflict and/or internal conversation emerges. In addition, the person begins to relate two or more classes of situations to sets of distinct internal responses. The pattern description has become much more integrated and interconnected with the self playing an active role in shaping these connections. Although the self acknowledges the intricate and complex patterns, it is not yet an agent of change itself.

At the fourth stage, Transformational Self-Knowledge, people can do more than describe their personality patterns; they have the ability to develop self-interventions to remedy problematic issues. People can identify the basic principles by which the dysfunctional pattern operates and describe specific strategies for changing this internal pattern. This capacity to change inner states is reflected by the following, "When my friends watched the video that I made for them, I felt nervous at first. But I told myself, that they really do appreciate what I've given them, especially the thought that I put into it. Besides, I told myself that they are not nearly as critical as I am; they are here to celebrate not criticize! Then, I can enjoy sharing what I have done. By verbalizing these thoughts to myself, I can get in touch with who I am."

Weinstein and Alschuler (1985) maintain that by incorporating this theory into counseling and education, professionals would become more effective questioners and teachers. By designing materials and adapting interviewing protocols that are sensitive to the student's or client's stage of self-understanding, the professional will promote development and facilitate personal growth. Issues such as resistance, low motivation,



or personality conflicts may be utilized too hastily and inaccurately, when the issue may be remedied when interventions are sensitive to the person's stage of self-development.

The self-knowledge stages outlined above will be used in this study to explain variations found in the data analysis. The rationale for selecting this model over the other cognitive developmental frameworks is for both pragmatic and qualitative reasons. Practically speaking, the tool for identifying Self-Knowledge stages offers many advantages. The ERT2 is easy to administer, non-threatening, and can be completed in a relatively short period of time. Other measures of cognitive developmental stage are much more labor intensive for both the participant and the researcher. Further, the ERT2 can be easily adapted to focus on personal experiences of role conflict. Finally, previous participants report personal benefits from completing the self-reflective exercise.

Qualitatively speaking, the most important reason for selecting this framework is that it holds the most validity for the research questions posed in this project. The main premise behind this model maintains that the way in which people develop knowledge about themselves within the physical and social world informs the natural development of people's interactions in the world. Hence, the way in which women make meaning of their different life roles would subsequently inform their interactions in the world. This cognitive developmental model focuses on a social context, not on identity development (Josselson 1987) or epistemological positions (Belenky et al., 1986). Moreover, Self-Knowledge Theory has recently been applied to how women experience multigenerational sexual abuse with promising findings (Baker, 1993). In

this study, stages of Self-Knowledge Development was strongly related to how people understand, recover from, and change patterns of multigenerational sexual abuse in their families. For these qualitative and pragmatic reasons, Self-Knowledge Theory has been selected as the most appropriate framework for this research project.

### Conclusion

The multiple role literature to date reveals seemingly contradictory findings in that women's different role experiences can be either helpful (Coleman et al., 1987; Gove & Zeiss, 1987; Marks, 1977; Repetti et al., 1989) or harmful (Fowlkes, 1987; Goode, 1960; Hall, 1975; Valdez & Gutek, 1984). In order to understand the complexities and processes of the potential benefits or detriments of role experiences, a qualitative approach is warranted. Field study research can enhance the existing multiple role literature by exploring the processes and meaning of the specific factors identified as impacting multiple roles. A qualitative approach will allow for an in-depth exploration of the thoughts and ideas of the participants.

The field of social cognitive development describes the processes by which people learn to understand, explain, monitor, and change their interactions with others. Specifically, Self-Knowledge Development Theory offers a developmental framework for understanding the links between meaning making and responses. This study takes an in depth look at how women describe, understand, experience, and respond to their different role commitments within a developmental framework. Hopefully, this developmental analysis will enrich the empirical literature on multiple role women and offer insight into enhancing women's multiple role experiences.

Because cognitive development also affects the ways in which people may or may not utilize the services available to them, this study will yield insight into the creation of 'developmentally appropriate' interventions. With more and more working mothers returning to full-time work and/or academic training, the implications for employee assistance programs, social service agencies, and college student personnel are critical. Hopefully, future treatment planning and program development can become sensitive to this cognitive dimension in order to enhance the effectiveness of the services provided.

Although this study emphasizes a cognitive developmental frame, other factors have been identified which contribute to the quality of women's multiple role experiences (Barnett, 1990; Baruch & Barnett, 1986, 1987; Crosby, 1987; DiBenedetto & Tittle, 1990; Gove & Zeiss, 1987; Verbrugge, 1987). Several researchers examined the psychological factors influencing the quality of women's multiple role experiences. Some of these variables include: perceived family support (Epstein, 1987), self-confidence and feelings of competence in juggling role responsibilities (Epstein, 1987; Morgan & Hock, 1984; Stolz-Loike, 1992), perceived control and decision making latitude (Piechowski, 1992), perceived home-career conflict (Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991), resourcefulness and leadership abilities (Epstein, 1987; Stolz-Loike, 1992), and satisfaction with marriage, family, and career (Epstein, 1987; Helson, Elliot, & Leigh, 1990). The author identifies the need for continued understanding of the multitudinous external and internal factors related to the quality of women's multiple role experiences.



This study aims to enrich the understanding of this literature, by offering a social cognitive developmental frame for holding this knowledge.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

The procedures for this project were designed as a means for gaining insight into how certain women experience and manage their different role responsibilities. Particular attention will be given to how these women negotiate their role responsibilities and the subsequent outcomes of their actions. This study will use semi-structured interviews to gather data about women's multiple role experiences.

#### Recruitment Procedures

Initially, the working mothers were recruited through community education workshops offered through a social service agency. The investigator was working with this agency on their Adult Outpatient Team and conducted a series of workshops throughout North Central Massachusetts on "Managing Life's Stresses." However, due to inclement weather and low participation, alternative recruitment strategies were employed. Participants were recruited through referrals from professionals working at a community mental health agency and a local community college. In addition, announcements were posted to attract working mothers. In each setting, potential participants were given the ERT2 and a background questionnaire as a screening tool. Then, if the potential participants were willing to be interviewed and met the desired sample criteria, they were contacted to participate in the project.

The recruitment letter (Appendix A) was used as an initial introduction to the project. Once women agreed to participate, the researcher described the nature of the project to their satisfaction and answered any questions that they had. The participant

consent form was explained, noting potential risks for participation. Once written and oral consent was obtained, each working mother initiated participation in this project. Upon completion of the written materials and audiotaped interview, participants were paid ten dollars.

### Participants

Eighteen working mothers were recruited from professional referrals, advertisements, and word of mouth. These potential participants were selected as they were 'established' in each of their roles of wife, mother, and paid worker. A person who is established in a particular role must have been in this role for at least five years. The rationale for this criteria was to eliminate any potential confounds that influence how a person makes meaning of a particular role due to the newness of this life role. In addition, the women for this project were between the ages of 35 and 50. By targeting women who are roughly the same age, the researcher hopes to limit the influence of other life cycle transitions. In addition, the selected participants reside in a common geographic location, North Central Massachusetts, reflecting the researcher's effort to identify participants from a common cultural experience.

### Instruments

#### The Experience Recall Test-2 (ERT2)

The Experience Recall Test-2 (ERT2): An Instrument and Scoring System for Assessing Maximum Stage Capacity in Self-Knowledge Development (Sweitzer & Weinstein, 1987) was designed to measure a person's maximum self-knowledge stage development, rather than a person's spontaneous response and stage of self-



understanding which is the purpose of the ERT2's predecessors, the Experience Recall Test (Tamashiro, 1976) and the Unforgettable Experience Recall (Weinstein and Alschuler, 1985). The ERT2 allows the scorer to name the highest stage of self-knowledge development displayed by the participant. The four stages are: Elemental, Situational, Internal Pattern, and Transformational. Situational and Internal Pattern have recently been divided into two substages, respectively. See Chapter 2 for descriptions of each stage and substage.

The ERT2 was developed to measure maximum capacity for self-knowledge, rather than the spontaneous stage elicited by the earlier measures. It is a group-administrable instrument usable by researchers and practitioners that requires minimal training for proficiency. It asks the participant to recall a problem or conflict that was uncomfortable to him/her, and then reflect upon it. Through a guided imagery exercise, several questions are given to assist the participant in self-reflection. After the exercise is completed, several specific, sequential questions are given for written response. Each of these questions are designed to elicit responses typical of self-knowledge stages. By completing the series of questions, the participant's responses are stimulated to yield his/her maximum stage capacity. The final score is based upon the response found which indicates the highest stage. When intercoder reliability was checked for by the ERT2, perfect agreement between three trained novice coders ranged from 62 to 71%. Agreement within one-half stage ranged from 86 to 95% (Sweitzer, & Weinstein, 1987). Agreement between novice coders and expert coders was within the same range. In regard to the ERT2's validity as a cognitive developmental measure, the

stage assignments made in the original study were correlated .73 with Loevinger's ego development stages. In addition, Kurt Fischer identified the concurrent validity between the Self-Knowledge stages and the Fischer Skill Levels.

The Experience Recall (ERT2) was administered along with the demographic survey to all potential interview candidates. The ERT2 was slightly modified for the purposes of this study. Instead of asking participants to select any incident to recall, they were asked to recall a time when they found that their roles were in conflict. They were then asked to answer the questions from the ERT2 based on this event. (See Interview Guide, Appendix F.)

By administering the ERT2 separate from the clinical interview, the researcher accomplished two aims, preserving anonymity of respondent's stage and achieving an equal distribution of stage across the participants. After administering the demographic survey and ERT2, the researcher removed all material from respondents who did not wish to be interviewed. Then, Dr. Weinstein, one of the authors of this instrument, coded the remaining ERT2s for stage of self-knowledge development. Thus, the researcher remained blind to the participant's stage of Self-Knowledge Development while conducting the clinical interview and completing the data analysis.

### Demographic Survey

The demographic survey allowed the researcher to identify certain willing participants for the interview phase of the research project. The researcher selected willing working mothers between the ages of 35 and 50 who were established in the

roles of spouse, parent, and paid worker to participate in the interview. Women who are 'established' in their roles must have had at least five years of experience in that role.

### The Interview Method

In-depth interviewing is a data collection technique used quite frequently by qualitative researchers. Kahn and Cannell (1957) describe this method as a "conversation with a purpose (p.149)." Typically, qualitative in-depth interviews are flexible and fluid, covering a few general topics to help uncover the participant's perspective around these issues. This process allows for the fundamental assumption of qualitative research which maintains that "the participant's perspective on the social phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 82.)

The in-depth interview method (Marshall & Rossman, 1989) combined with the intensive case-study method used by Belenky et al., (1986) served as models for this project. In-depth or 'clinical' interviewing was first classically illustrated through Piaget's work with children (Piaget, 1963). Piaget, and other developmentalists after him, developed an interview protocol as a template, and, while interviewing probed for further information where appropriate. The purpose of probing was to elicit the most complex cognitive thinking available to the participant.

To avoid the temptation of using questions to push a respondent up the developmental ladder, the researcher incorporated Weinstein and Alschuler's (1985) suggestion to emphasize stage elaboration over stage transition. The interviewer encouraged and validated participants as they revealed their perceptions and self-



understandings. Questions designed to identify the cognitive developmental schemes described by others (e.g., Gilligan, 1982) as well as information which would enrich the understanding of the multiple role experience were also embedded in the interview.

The interview explored a few general topics to help uncover the participant's meaning perspective, while allowing the participant to respond to each question as she felt appropriate. These topics included questions about: life roles (e.g., "In reality, what kind of a parent are you? Describe yourself as a parent."), role management (e.g., "What would make it easier to manage all of your role responsibilities?") and an open-ended conclusion whereby the participant could share anything else that she felt the researcher should know about being a multiple role woman.

The interview contained more general, less threatening questions at the beginning of the interview, such as "What are the different life roles [such as wife, mother, worker, daughter, sister, etc.] that you currently play?" This facilitated the development of rapport with the participants before moving to more in-depth questions of a personal nature. A specific emphasis of the interview was on a recalled experience of role conflict. The last group of questions probed for responses concerning role management. See Appendix E for Interview Guide.

The data for this project was collected through face-to-face interviews and written materials. The investigator interviewed eighteen multiple role women, with each interview ranging from forty-five minutes to two and one half hours. The average interview length was about one and one half hours. Interviews were conducted,

audiotaped and transcribed by the author, with all identifying names changed to preserve anonymity.

Prior to the beginning of the formal study, several steps were taken to improve the interviewing protocol. Initial versions of the interview guide were reviewed by three adult development experts, Dr. John C. Carey, Dr. Michael Commons and Dr. Gerald Weinstein. These experts had extensive experience in clinical interviewing and probing for developmental stage. In addition, three pilot interviews were conducted. In light of this input, the interview protocol was modified to yield more pertinent data for the purposes of this project. In addition, the researcher identified numerous parallel questions for the key content area of role management.

### Interview Procedures

Each potential participant was given a letter of introduction (Appendix A), a participant consent form (Appendix C), and a pre-interview questionnaire (Appendix B). Once she agreed to participate in this project, arrangements were made to schedule an interview. All interviews were conducted at a location selected by the participant; half of the interviews were conducted at the participant's place of employment and the other half were conducted at the participant's home.

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher reviewed all written materials with the participant, clarifying any questions presented. Participants were encouraged to continue asking questions when necessary and instructed that they could omit answers as they chose or stop the interview at any time. Next the interview topics were outlined and the interview initiated.

Throughout the interview process, the author encouraged each participant to respond as thoroughly as possible. Care was given to acknowledge all personal strengths and inner resources that were identified by each participant. The researcher attended carefully to non-verbal communication in order to be as sensitive and respectful as possible. In addition, the investigator made every effort to use the participant's own language when probing for clarification and refrained from any evaluative comments. At the completion of the interview, each participant was questioned about her experience, with particular attention to how it could have been more comfortable for her. She was offered \$10.00 for her time and expertise. Each interview was audio taped, transcribed with all identifiable information changed, and erased.

### Data Reduction and Analysis

After the transcriptions were completed, master copies were kept on computer with two separate back-up files on separate disks. A hard copy of all materials was maintained. Each interview transcription was assigned a date code. A log of the corresponding demographic data was kept in a separate file so that the author was blind to any identifying data when analyzing the transcriptions.

Each phase of the data analysis involved data reduction, whereby the author brought the voluminous transcriptive data into manageable chunks, and interpretation, whereby the author gave meaning and insight to the words of the participants. The theoretical overview provided key concepts and variables which guided the analysis. Initially, the author organized the data by reading and rereading each interview



transcription in order to become intimately familiar with the nuances and subtleties of the conversations. A log was maintained throughout this phase, with pertinent observations recorded for each review. The transcribed interviews were then imported into a user-friendly software program, The Ethnograph, a program designed to facilitate the analysis of data collected in qualitative research (Seidel, Friese, & Leonard, 1995). Using this software package, the researcher identified, coded, and categorized the prevalent patterns that emerged in the data. In addition, observations were maintained in an ongoing log. This phase was the most time-consuming, but also the most intellectually stimulating. As elaborated by Marshall and Rossman (1989),

"The analytic process demands a heightened awareness of the data, a focused attention to those data, and an openness to the subtle, tacit undercurrents of social life. Identifying salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together is the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis and one that can integrate the entire endeavor. Through questioning the data and reflecting on the conceptual framework, the researcher engages the ideas and the data in significant intellectual work" (p. 115 - 116.)

As categories of meaning emerged, discernment of whether the categories were internally consistent yet distinct from one another was necessary. In identifying these initial themes, the researcher obtained the expertise of two outside readers in order to build internal reliability with the coding criteria. As a result of this feedback, one coding category was modified, and the data adjusted accordingly. In eight instances, discrepancies were identified by the outside readers. In these instances, the author

consulted with each reader, reviewed the discrepancy and reached consensus to determine the appropriate coding category.

As categories and patterns between them become apparent in the data, the author began the process of developing hypotheses and testing them against the data. These hypotheses related to the research questions guiding this project and the theoretical review. In the process of refining or refuting these hypotheses, alternative explanations were sought. Initially, this process yielded the thematic analysis of the data. This entire process was repeated when analyzing the data by self-knowledge stage.

Transcriptions of each interview were thoroughly analyzed in this manner. The text was arranged according to topical themes which reflected its content. Utilizing the software package, thematic transcript chunks were generated to provide a more focused analysis of each content area. A master transcription for each interview was maintained for the purpose of ongoing consultation for contextual information. The number of formalized themes was grounded in the data and expressed within the framework of the research questions guiding this project.

### Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of this research project merit some attention. By using a phenomenological approach, the researcher obtains a richer understanding of the quality of women's multiple role experiences. This approach allows for the participants to describe and define how she experiences her roles. Quantitative approaches typically rely on a global construct such as "marital satisfaction," "familial satisfaction," or

“happiness” as a definition of the quality of the multiple role experience. By using a qualitative approach, the data enriches our understanding of this issue and better informs possible interventions for enhancing women’s development and reducing the harmful impact of multiple role experiences.

In addition to gaining a clearer sense of the construct of multiple role quality, this qualitative project enhances the existing multiple role literature by exploring the process and meaning of the specific factors identified as impacting multiple roles. Moreover, the developmental underpinnings of this meaning-making suggest a possible explanation for the apparent contradictions surrounding this literature.

The results of this study should be interpreted with the following limitations in mind. One limitation of this study is that the extent to which the results are generalizable is limited by the following characteristics of the sample. The sample for this study was recruited from women living in North Central Massachusetts, so it is limited to reflecting the social norms of this region.

Second, the women in this study were all between the ages of 35 and 50. Parallels between their experiences and those of women who in younger adulthood should be interpreted with caution. According to Mercer et al., (1989), the 'launching into adulthood' stage (ages 16 - 25) impact women's development more critically than any other developmental transition. Also, the experience of those women who have had less life experience with the roles of wife, mother, and paid worker may be very different from those who are older.



Finally, there are some inherent limitations common to a qualitative case study approach. This study will provide a detailed thematic and developmental analysis of women's multiple role experiences. However, it will not be predictive or causal in any way. Further, although every effort to ensure a standard interviewing experience will be made, there may be variation in the depth and context of individual interviews. In the clinical interview method tradition (Piaget, 1963), continuity and standardization is sacrificed in order to enhance individual understanding. Thus, I will not ask each participant exactly the same questions in the same chronological order.

The authenticity and completeness of the data collected is limited by the time spent with each interview participant. The level of trust and rapport which was developed and established over the course of the interview process impacts the validity of the data. The content of the data is also limited by the participant's affective and physical state at the time of the interview.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This chapter is arranged in three major sections. The first part is a description of the sample, summarized in Table 4.1, and the results of the cognitive developmental assessment. The second section identifies the major themes that emerged during the first stage of data analysis. The third part, the developmental analysis, reveals how the participants negotiated each of these themes in accordance with their stage of self-knowledge development.

#### The Sample

The sample of participants in this project comprised of 18 women between 38 and 48 years old, with a mean age of 44 years. They were all white and lived in a rural, working class community in north central Massachusetts. At the time of the interview, all of the women identified as being in the roles of spouse, parent, and paid worker.

The participants reported the length of their current marriage ranging from 2 to 27 years, with an average of 16.7 years and a median of 18 years marital experience.

The woman who reported her current marriage of two years noted a previous marriage of eight years. Four women acknowledged that they were currently considering separation from their current partner. With regard to parental experience, the participants' reported a range of 4 to 18 years experience in the role of mother, with an average of 13.6 years and a median of 14.5 years parental experience. With regard to work experience, participants reported a range of full-time work experience between 2 and 24 years, with a median of 12 years full-time work experience and a range of part-

time work experience between 1 and 20 years, with a median of 5 years part-time work experience. All of the women reported currently working at least 20 hours per week, with a range of 20 to 60 hours per week, and a median of 37.5 hours per week.

All of the participants completed some form of higher education degree, with two participants having completed an Associates degree, five having completed a Bachelors degree, and ten having completed some graduate training or advanced degree. With regard to socio-economic status, three women acknowledged a combined household income level before taxes of under \$39,999 per year, six reported income ranging from \$40,000 to \$59,999 per year, four reported income ranging from \$60,000 to \$79,999 and four reported a combined household income exceeding \$80,000 per year. The median combined household income level for this sample was between \$40,000 to \$59,999 per year.

All of the participants held employment positions in either education, human service or nursing; the majority of these women held more than one job ( $n = 14$ ). Paid education positions include elementary and secondary teaching positions, community college instructor, librarian's aide, learning specialist and grant writer in higher educational settings, professional tutor, and non-paid education positions include: Sunday School teacher, home-school educator, and school-related volunteer positions. Paid human service positions include: mental health therapist, child care administrator and college counselor. Paid nursing and related positions include: nurse and home health aid. Other paid positions held by several women in this sample include: billing

clerk, fashion copywriter, travel agent, professional musician, and financial service salesperson.

Table 4.1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the sample. In addition, the coded names of each participant reveals that woman's stage of self-knowledge development.



Table 4.1

## Characteristics of the Participants

Participant	Age	Educational Level	# Hours Work/Week	# Years Worked	# Years Married	# Children	Occupation
Susan	38	graduate school	45	17	17	3	Teacher, Administrator
Sherry	40	graduate school	35	22	9	2	Therapist, Teacher
Stella	NA	associate's degree	20	16	15	3	Librarian's Aide, College Student
Sophia	41	bachelor's degree	20	14	10	2	Counselor, Teacher, Administrator, Graduate Student
Sylvia	49	graduate school	37.5	14	27	5	Counselor
Patricia	45	bachelor's degree	32	15	21	2	Teacher, Billing Clerk
Pam	48	bachelor's degree	35	22	25	2	Home Health Aide, Fashion Copywriter
Paulette	45	graduate school	40	22	12	2	Counselor, Teacher, Learning Specialist
Penny	46	graduate school	45	21	18	2	Teacher
Polly	44	bachelor's degree	32	9	23	3	Teacher, Counselor, Financial Sales, Secretary
Denise	46	graduate school	40	24	24	5	Teacher, Administrator
Diane	39	graduate school	60	12	20	3	Residential Clinician, Teacher, Therapist
Debra	48	graduate school	35	25	23	4	Instructor, Tutor, Grant Facilitator
Doreen	40	graduate school	45	6	8	4	Instructor, Therapist
Daphne	44	bachelor's degree	40	17	10	2	Teacher, Advisor

Note. First letter of name indicates stage of self-knowledge development with S = Situational 1, P = Pattern 1, and D = Pattern 2.

### Self-Knowledge Stages

The assessment of self-knowledge stage carefully adhered to the scoring manual. Professor Gerald Weinstein, co-author of the self-knowledge scoring procedures, scored all ERT2 protocols. In three cases, there was insufficient data to clearly assign a self-knowledge stage. After discussion, these protocols were discarded from the study.

Based on the ERT2 data, five women were at the Situational 2 stage of self-knowledge, five were at Pattern 1, and five were at Pattern 2. None of the participants in this study were at the Elemental or Transformational stages of self-knowledge development. Refer to Table 4.1 to identify the participant's stage of self-knowledge development.

### Theme Analysis

The first step in analyzing the various themes that emerged in the interview data is to first understand how these women define each of their roles. The participants in this study defined the roles of spouse, parent, and worker using both commonly-held stereotypical terms as well as more personalized definitions. These women also could articulate societal expectations, family influences, role models and personal expectations within their definitions for being a multiple role woman. Once the themes in these role definitions are described, the analysis then turns to the self-enhancing and self-restrictive aspects of being a multiple role woman. Role management issues are addressed next, with attention given to the resources identified for managing roles as well as those barriers that hinder role management. Both internal and external factors

are reviewed. Finally, role conflict and negotiation of that conflict are presented with particular attention given to the prominent themes of how these women resolved their role conflict.

### Definitions

As the women in this study described what it meant to be a wife or mother or paid worker, their descriptions can be categorized in three ways: internally derived meanings, externally adopted meanings and unclear meanings. Each of the three roles will be discussed within these three categories.

Internally derived meanings are role definitions which are crafted by the individual participant. These definitions may reflect traditional or non-traditional role expectations, but the authorship of these roles is clearly held by the participant. She clearly identifies herself as choosing her own definition of the life role. Externally adopted meanings are role definitions whereby the participants acknowledges that her roles are defined for her by some source outside of herself. Her current situation, previous role models, family influences or societal role expectations are perceived to determine how she defines her roles. Unclear meanings are role definitions which cannot be assigned to either of the above categories due to the participant's difficulty in defining her life role. In these instances, the women who had difficulty articulating the meaning of their life role acknowledged that they felt that they were in transition around that aspect of their lives.

## Spousal Role

As women described what it meant to be a wife or partner, their descriptions reflected an internally derived meaning, an externally adopted meaning, or the current meaning of the role was unclear. The women who had difficulty articulating the meaning of the spousal role acknowledged that they felt they were in transition with regard to this particular life role.

Internally derived meanings reflect a range of possibilities with regard to the spousal role. Some women succinctly conceptualized the role while others incorporated situational influences into their definitions. Penny defined the spousal role in an internally-derived, concise manner. For her, the ideal wife means:

What's an ideal wife? I don't think that there is one... I think every couple needs to determine a relationship that works for them and feels comfortable for them and I don't think that there are ideal wives.

Polly also gave a more personalized definition. For her, the meaning of a wife evolved out of her personal context. She shares:

That's my ideal of a wife, is a partner, and not one where the woman has a one up position or the man has the one up position. It's one where I am free to accept what I believe and respect what he believes, so it's based on mutuality and respect and support.... I really love it. It's just all of it, the companionship, the belonging, that we share two children, and that we share a history. It's ten years now, and it's knowing that we're going to share a future. So it's not a dream, it's something that's work, but it's something that will fulfill a dream that we both share and that's to be partners in our old age.

Other women shared role definitions which relied heavily upon outside influences. These women tended to more passively adopt role definitions from some source outside of themselves. For example, Stella acknowledged external influences as



being salient in her meaning-making around the spousal role. She illustrated this by the following:

As a wife my kids would say [I'm doing] OK. I guess they see me as doing my chores and my things that I'm supposed to be doing... I think that I'm able to handle most of the household things, and I think, well communication, my husband says that I don't listen enough, but I know basically what is going on in that household all of the time... Being a wife is just OK because I've done it, you know, maybe because I didn't know what I was supposed to be anyway, because I don't know if my parents... my mother always worked so she never really took the wife role.... So I guess I didn't have a real role model.... To me, being a wife at this point hasn't been all that satisfying for me. It's not something that I would think that I'd want to do over and over again. I mean, you might as well, if you're gonna do it, you might as well just date. I mean, why have the commitment which means responsibility for that other person?

For Stella, being a wife came with some sort of mandated job description in that she believes that there are tasks that she is “supposed to do.”

Several women in this sample acknowledged over the course of the interview that they were considering separation or divorce from their current spouses. When these women were asked to describe the meaning of this role, they either could not articulate how they perceived this role for themselves or their definitions seemed to fluctuate.

Penny described how she had come to the realization that she was not able to express who she really was as a person within the relationship, not for lack of trying but for lack of receptivity from her current partner. She noted that the external functions of the spousal role (e.g., household maintenance, financial contributions, work/family obligations) were intact, but the internal, intrinsic supports were absent. She described this transition and self-realization in the following manner:

I'm not getting the chance to express the person that I am. And that person has been there all along and has been struggling through all of this taking 100% of the relationship and the burden of trying to create a relationship and I think I've now realized that I'll take 50% but I don't want to take on any more than that. I think I've come to the conclusion that you can't, I mean, people are who they are, and you can't make them into something that will satisfy your need for closeness. I mean, if it's not there, if they're not seeing that as a need or a necessity or something that they want, no matter how much you want it, it's not going to happen. It's a tough thing to learn.

### Parental Role

Perspectives on the parental role varied somewhat from the spousal role. All of the women tended to reveal internally-derived definitions of the maternal role. Some were more elaborate than others, incorporating developmental influences, individual differences and contextual changes into the meaning of being a mother.

Debra approached her parental role to her three children in a singular, straightforward fashion as evidenced by the following:

Basically [to be a mother is] to nurture and protect children, my children. To be available to them for their needs and also to teach them things that I think are important... And just being available... To be willing to hear and also to instruct. And I take my job very seriously. I think its a challenge to be the same kind of communicator to the different personalities of children.

Denise initially described an ideal mother as "like Beaver, the Cleavers or something?" When prompted to elaborate on her own ideal of the maternal role, she characterized the maternal role in a very personalized manner. She conveyed her meaning-making in the following excerpt:

My ideal is that she's honest, she answers the questions as best as she can without lying to them. She tries not to be abusive on any level if she can help it. And she gets a lot of support and

outside help so that she never feels alone and that she somehow reaches the message to them that it's OK to get help if you need it... and it's OK to go outside to get help if they can't get it from me or whatever. And that they will just grow into people who know how to find help if they need it who don't see looking or going for help is something that means that they are weak.

Doreen revealed illustrations of how her internally-derived role definition changed depending upon the needs of their children. She elaborated on the complexity of the maternal role in the following manner:

That's a very complicated role. The older my children get, the more complicated it becomes. The role first of all for me is being attentive and aware and sensitive and present. I don't see myself as the traditional mother, I'm not the cookie baker that stays at home and knits and does all of that. I think that for me I'm very dedicated to helping my children get to a place where they can be independent and be exactly who they were meant to be in this life. And my role in that is to sort of be a guide as someone who can offer suggestions, and love, and nurturing and validation. I think it's very important to be a validator as a mother. And I provide for them, of course. But I tend to look at the higher needs, rather than the lower needs, like the safety needs, of course those are sort of given, like you clothe them and feed them and put a roof over their head. But at this stage in the game with an 18-year-old and a 14-year-old, it's more of a guide. It's more of a being present for them and accepting of them and validating them as people, which isn't always easy, but that's kind of how I see my role.

Polly, who currently is a parent of a 6-year-old boy and a 13-year-old girl, conveyed a sense that her maternal role changed depending upon the individual needs of her children. She shares her personalized perspective by sharing:

I equate being a mother with someone who has been given a gift, and the gift is the children, and it's not a gift to do what we want, but it's a gift that comes with responsibility, and that is to nurture, support and help the children develop... Someone who accepts that fact that they'll change and grow and with the change and growth will come, they're personalities are not static.



They are going to have difficult moments, and being accepting and being able to love them and accept them even when they screw up in the most awful ways. And being able to help them shake whatever it is and move on. But never losing sight of the responsibility that the role requires, and that's lifelong... I think it's work to constantly be a good mother, to have to think even more consciously about how decisions or actions affect the children. And their personalities are ones that, it's just inherent in their growing and developing that they are going to be challenging and they are going to be difficult and they are going to be wanting their own voice. And being able to sit back and allow them to have a voice.

She continues in a later dialogue to convey how her role changes depending upon the developmental needs of her children. However, she also acknowledges the interacting effect of her own developmental influences and her responsibility as a parent to maintain an emphasis on meeting her children's developmental needs:

It's like keeping in mind their development as well as keeping my own development in check... So it's constantly keeping that in check, and not allowing myself to become a child, in that respect, when what they need is an adult. And then there are other times when they want a child, and it's appropriate for me to allow myself to be a kid with them, and to let go with them. And then there are other times when I have to be the adult, and be a real consistent adult. So it's having to be aware of their development as well as mine, and where do I fit in, and how does this role play out.

The women in this project tended to define their maternal role very personally and, while heavily influenced by societal expectations, these women did not hesitate to incorporate these influences into their own, unique definition.

### Paid Worker Role

Women defined the paid worker role in a variety of ways. Some women described specific skills or qualities of a worker while others described how the worker



role varied depending upon the context. Economic factors clearly played a role in how women defined the worker role. Some women acknowledged that they had to work and would prefer not to work; others stated that the worker role was a chosen role, not a necessary role. Several stated that they needed to work to support the family, but would also choose to work. A few women did not share the role that economic factors played upon being a paid worker.

Women who described the worker role strictly by noting specific skills or work ethic qualities tended to have short, concise definitions. For Stella, being a worker meant “to come in and do my job to the best of my ability and to hopefully leave it there.” Debra succinctly illustrated her definition of the ideal worker as, “An ideal worker is somebody who is good at what they do and enjoys what they do and is paid for what they do.”

Women with more of a contextual conceptualization of the worker role gave examples which conveyed how their perceptions of the worker role have changed or evolved over time. The spontaneous responses of these women revealed that they originally thought of working in one way but later changed their conceptions due to the impact of particular personal or environmental influences. Susan described how her perceptions of her worker role have changed over time:

I think [an ideal worker is] someone who makes a good strong commitment, that does a thorough job, that is always trying to figure ways to do the job better. And she's continuing to get educated in some way, whether that be through college or just advanced training, that sort of thing. I think people professionally and as a person in general, that you're always evolving. And professionally I have evolved. I mean, two years ago my philosophy on certain things about my job or the field of

early childhood was very different than it is right now. It's ever changing. And I think that's healthy and good and important.

Paulette revealed her definition of the worker role as being dependent upon each individual's unique characteristics and personality, illustrating the impact of personal influences on how one perceives the worker role. She conveyed her sentiments by stating:

I really believe that an ideal worker would depend totally upon the personality of the person and how they view work, because every person has their own concept of what work means to them in the context of who they are and you can get into things like loyalty, punctuality, dedication to the job... but doesn't it really depend on who the person is and what is most important in their lives, how they would view what is a wonderful worker?

Sophia indicated that, for her, the worker role changes constantly, depending upon both personal and environmental influences. She clarified her perspective in sharing:

An ideal teacher is a reflective practitioner who is always thinking about what she is doing and always learning. [A reflective practitioner is someone] that is always thinking about, not only the kids, but you are always thinking about what you are doing and watching it, and how is it working, and staying up to date with other people's theories and other people's practice, and trying new things, but you never stop. I'm kind of like that. Well, I've changed in the years that I've taught. I've changed so much of my practice based on reading and visiting other teachers and I'm about to do it again! You're dealing with parents and administration and other teachers and public perceptions and it's always changing. And what I think it should be is always changing.

#### Summary of Definitions of the Roles of Wife, Mother and Paid Worker

The interviews revealed numerous definitions of the roles of wife, mother and paid worker. In some instances, the influence of external factors (e.g., societal expectations, familial influences, role models, life circumstances) played a critical role

in shaping how these women defined their role experiences. However, most of the women tended to internally derive their own unique definitions, frequently incorporating these external influences. Some women had more straightforward, concise definitions while others shared elaborately complex meanings which reflected individual differences, developmental changes, circumstantial influences, and other contextual elements.

### Meaning of Being a Multiple Role Woman

After participants described their different role experiences, the interviewer used their various life role examples as evidence of them being multiple role women. Subsequently, each woman was asked to respond to the next set of questions with this definition in mind. As the women in this study were asked to describe the meaning of this term and its impact on themselves, all of the participants spontaneously shared the self-enhancing and/or self-restrictive elements of being a multiple role woman. In the process, most women described specific aspects of how their multiple role experiences impacted their self-identity. These participants clarified their perceptions of being a multiple role woman in various ways. Five women conceptualized their various role experiences as being integrated within their self-identity, while four other women viewed their role experiences as separate from their core self. One woman acknowledged that her self-identity fluctuates in relation to her multiple role experiences.

Women who tended to view their multiple role experiences as integrated into their self-identity described their roles as being part of who they are, not separate from



their core sense of self. Polly put it simply, "It's not a hat that you put on. It's something that becomes part of my being." Susan expanded on this conceptualization by the following:

The multiplicity [of being a multiple role woman] is just part of it. It's just part of who I am. That's right. It's who I am. If I didn't have a profession, then I probably would be doing something else. I probably would have three or four other things going on.

For her, the context of the multiple roles didn't matter; all roles were integrated into her self-identity regardless of the nature of the role experience. Doreen described her process of conceptualizing her self in the context of her multiple role experiences by:

I think that sometimes it's very difficult to wear so many different hats and not feel confused about that, but as I get older I start to see them melt together, to create a more unified feeling. A more holistic total I think that the more I know who I am, the less the diverse roles affect me.

On the other hand, several women described their roles as being separate from their self-identity. Most of these women described an internal conflict between the roles and their core identity, using language such as "feeling fragmented" or "being pulled" by opposing role responsibilities which created a strain on their core sense of self. One woman, however, simply viewed her self-identity as separate and distinct from her different role experiences, without evidence of any internal dynamics. Examples of how women described the separateness of their role experiences from their sense of self include:

I think I have a strong sense of self and I'm very grateful that I do because I feel that I'm in a lot of battles in my life. So that this, all of these multiple roles pull at it all the time. And I'm so glad that it's so thick and firmly established because it would be,



I think of it as this cloth doll, it would be stuffing all over the place right now, if it wasn't so rock hard as I believe that it must be. The fiber would be all over the place. (Denise)

[Being a multiple role woman] fragments my [sense of self] because I feel differently in different situations and it's hard to sort of get them back together at times. So you have these multiple response mechanisms that I find disconcerting. I'll respond differently in all the roles. There's this anxiety or fear that I can't do it all and do it well... I think I bring this pressure on myself. (Sherry)

Sophia described this separateness from the self-representation without any internal conflicts evident. She clarified her understanding of the impact of her multiple role experiences on her sense of self by stating:

I guess if you took the roles away, there's a solid core of 'me-ness' that has nothing to do with any of them...so who I am isn't any of those roles, who I am is something deeper that's independent of those roles.

Several women expressed difficulty in describing the impact of their multiple role experiences upon their self-identity, indicating either an internal sense of confusion about its impact or revealing fluctuations between the self being integrated with diverse role experiences and the self being separate from their role experiences.

Finally, Daphne shared that her perceptions of her self-identity fluctuated between feeling that her attention to her role experiences causes her to lose her sense of self and at other times feeling integrated in that her roles are part of her sense of self. She described the relationship between her multiple roles and her sense of self by stating that:

[Being a multiple role woman] can affect [my sense of self] in the way that I feel that I've lost [my sense of self] for a while. Key roles will be foremost in my mind for handling them instead

of being myself. Other times I feel like I'm myself and I'm my role and that this is who I am and this is my life and that's OK.

### Self-Enhancing Aspects of Multiple Role Experiences

Throughout the interviews, women shared many examples of the personal benefits of being a multiple role woman. This section highlights the most frequently cited themes of the self-enhancing aspects of multiple role experiences. All of the women in this study identified increased skills and activities through multiple role involvement which were perceived as self-enhancing. Three-fourths of the participants gave examples of how their various role experiences gave them an increased sense of self-competency and self-confidence in their abilities. Three-fourths of these women also conveyed that they gained an increased versatility and flexibility in themselves, viewing themselves as multi-dimensional and multi-faceted. Other common themes illustrated by participants include an enhanced self-image or self-esteem and increased knowledge of the self and others as well as a general sense of increased learning through exposure to previously unknown experiences.

#### Provides Exposure to New Activities Builds Support Network

All of the women described how their multiple role experiences increased their exposure to new activities and aided in their development of new skills. Sophia shared how her increased level of activities stemming from multiple role involvement was a good fit for her personality:

It keeps me busy, I like to be busy. I like to work... I wouldn't want to just stay at home and be a wife and mother. I want these other roles, and eventually maybe when my son is gone, maybe I will take on other roles because it is more interesting than being a single role woman. [laughter] One of the roles

alone would not satisfy me. I'd have to make up things to keep me busy.

Daphne acknowledged that her increased number of experiences, new skills, and new learning opportunities contributed to her viewing herself as a more well-rounded person:

I think that you are a more well-rounded person, that you are able to get a lot of experiences that help you to be more well-rounded. You get to see other people in action and you get to see how they handle things or don't handle things. You learn from the other people, you learn from good things and you learn from the mistakes. You also have the opportunity to be near more people and get feedback from them.

Other women describe how their multiple role experiences have increased their level of activity as well as increased their social network. Two women convey this self-enhancing quality in the following:

I now know a lot of people. With all the different jobs that I've had, I've had a really wide experience in terms of contacts.  
(Debra)

It gives you a chance to express different interests. You get a chance to do a lot of different things, meet a lot of different people. (Penny)

The most frequently cited self-enhancing aspect of participating in multiple role experiences concerns an increased level of activities. The women in this study view this increased involvement as self-enhancing as it creates opportunities to develop new skills, enhances their support system, stimulates new learning opportunities and fulfills personal needs.



## Enhances Self-Competencies

Another frequently cited self-enhancing attribute of engaging in multiple role experiences centers around an increased sense of self-competency. Most of the women in this project acknowledged that engaging in these different roles creates a sense of increased self-competency or self-confidence in their abilities, particularly in their ability to manage or "juggle" the many different demands of their various roles. Some women, as illustrated in the following comments, owned their enhanced self-competency while simultaneously acknowledging the decrease in self-competency when role management is more difficult:

Sometimes I feel real good because I feel like I can do it all. And other days I wanna just quit because it's just too much. The days when it's not going good there are too many people asking me too many things. (Stella)

I guess I would like to have a little bit more control. I think that, I talk about feeling competent about how I can juggle it all, but then on the other hand, there are times when I feel that I don't have any control over this. Things are such that, I feel that there are times that I don't have as much control... I feel at the mercy of... and that, that's across the board in the multi-faceted roles that I have, there's this sense of a loss of personal control, of individual control. (Diane)

Other women conveyed a sense of satisfaction with their level of self-competency gained through their multiple role experiences. These women did not automatically engage in self-deprecation around their perceived competencies, rather, their comments illustrated a sense of being "good enough" in their self-competency. Two women illustrated this sense of inner self-competency by sharing:

It's very challenging but it's exciting, too, when you find that you can fulfill them, because the day that you've juggled everything

OK, you think, 'Gee, wow!' It makes you feel really good, and multi-dimensionally, I feel more rich. (Denise)

I always feel like I'm pretty capable to do whatever I set my mind to do, so it must be a good self-esteem builder. And I don't always juggle it all well, and then I say, 'oh well, does it really matter anyway?' (Paulette)

Another women added an additional self-enhancing quality of an enhanced sense of humor:

I guess I see myself as, because of all the multiplicity, as very competent. Because I'm doing them all and I feel I'm, for the most part, successful at them. I think that I have a level or sense of competence or confidence most of the time, that I can do all of these roles and juggle a career and juggle a family and juggle the rest of it and still have a sense of humor. (Diane)

With regard to the women's increased sense of self-competency gained through multiple role experiences, it appears that some of the women in this study, while acknowledging increased self-competency, tended to immediately follow these statements with perceptions of inadequacy around their difficulties in consistently managing their multiple role demands. Other women did not automatically undercut themselves as they described their increased self-competency. These women tended to focus on their self-competencies without the internal expectation that they perform at this level all the time. They simply owned their self-competency and expressed increased self-satisfaction with these accomplishments.

#### Creates Multi-dimensional Identity

Another theme which most of the women in this study conveyed as a self-enhancing aspect of their multiple role involvement concerns a gain in multi-dimensionality. These women considered it self-enhancing in that they viewed

themselves as having an enriched identity gained through the complexity of these various roles. Polly articulated this as being a more complete person:

And I think I've become a more complete person or a fuller person. It's like I was a one dimensional person at one time and now I'm even more multi-dimensional because of my relationship and what my marriage has brought, and my family, and what my new [work] role has brought. So its added even more dimensions to my life.

Debra shared that the increased multi-dimensionality of her multiple roles made her more flexible and adaptable in different situations by voicing, "Flexibility... having the chance or being able to take on a different identity depending upon what I'm doing."

Many of these women described how their increased multi-dimensionality was self-enhancing in that it suited their personality and met personal needs. These women acknowledged that they were drawn to complexity, variety, and change. Thus, being a multiple role woman was self-fulfilling as it met personal needs and/or served as a natural outgrowth of their personalities. Susan articulated how her multiple role experiences augmented her inner desire for complexity, stimulation and change:

I think the good is that I like different things and I couldn't sit at a desk and do the same thing 8 hours a day. I like having the multiple self, that's exciting to me. There is some excitement in juggling all of that, I've come to realize over the years that I do enjoy that. Too much of it is stressful. So the positives are that somehow, it just feels really good to me, it feels comfortable, and I look for it. Even in careers, I like this job because I don't teach the same course every semester, I don't serve on the same committee every semester, it's different. And at the agency it was the same thing. I had different families, I was doing home visits, I was doing support groups for families, so there were multiple kinds of things. Its just so me-thing that I've identified that's important. So that's the benefit that for me I just enjoy that complexity.



Finally, two women shared that if they were not engaging in these multiple role experiences and, instead focused on only one role or task, they would not be able to thrive as a person. In fact, they identify how this lack of multiple role involvement would be harmful for them:

It's the only way to feed all of the various parts of a complex person, so as not to shrivel. And I guess that just knowing myself, that if I don't have real important deadlines or issues to deal with then I either become very complacent or lackadaisical and manage to accomplish nothing, or I find things just so unchallenging that it's almost a depressing point and neither of those is really where I want to be at, so when much is demanded, I come through. (Patricia)

I wouldn't do it any other way because I would be sick. I would be depressed. I would be sick, I would be physically sick because I would make myself sick focusing on too much of any one thing and feeling that I had losses in my life... I hated it when I didn't have this busy life. (Pam)

### Builds Self-Esteem

Many women shared how their multiple role involvement enhanced their self-image or strengthened their sense of self. These women described how their global self-esteem was enriched through their various life roles. For many of these women, an enhanced self-image was their first response when asked to describe how being a multiple role woman impacted their sense of self. Polly, in response to this question, shared the following:

It's a real positive image. I think about that question, a positive image emerges and part of it is that to be able to do and function in so many different roles and to do well, not just from my perspective but from others' perspectives, is a very rewarding reflection because it describes me or a person who is very capable. And not just capable in one or two roles, but is capable in multiple roles, so it's a very positive self-image.

Other women shared how their self-image has been strengthened through their various role experiences by the following comments:

Parts of it make the sense of self stronger and it makes me feel versatile and that I can be strong for others as well as for myself.  
(Patricia)

It strengthens my sense of self by filling in all those little pieces that need attention. I guess I get what I need from all those things. (Pam)

Thus, many of the women in this study feel that their participating in multiple roles has served to strengthen or enhance their self-image. They gave examples of how their self-esteem has been strengthened through providing many opportunities to gain positive feedback, meeting personal needs, and providing outlets to demonstrate personal competencies.

#### Provides New Learning Opportunities

Finally, many of the women in this study described how they increased their knowledge, both personally and professionally, through multiple role experiences. These women articulated how their perceptions of themselves and others have expanded through their various experiences. Polly eloquently articulated this increased wisdom by stating:

Oh, just, my world has expanded profoundly. My views, my empathy for others, my perception of the world has expanded. My perception of the role of men has expanded. It's just helped me to become so aware not necessarily of just personal issues, but of global issues and how, whether its women, men, children, how the struggles and difficulties in their lives may be affected by their roles, but not necessarily. So it's just really expanded my view of this. And it's also helped me because I've had so many different life experiences, it's like, I can sit here and say, 'oh

yeah, I know what that's like' and mean it. Or people who are worried where their next meal comes from, I know what that's like. So I've had, my world has expanded in both dimensions, in both areas I think a part of it is not necessarily fate, I think I've put myself in positions that have encouraged that kind of understanding.

Susan shared how her global understanding of women's roles and how that understanding fits for her personally by the following:

Well I think that it's made me look at the world all around me, it's really made me aware of other women and their roles. And not in a negative way, but I think very strongly that women have to be comfortable with and happy with what they are doing. If it's staying at home with the kids and they're really good at it and they like it, then great. And I admire those kinds of people, it's just not for me. It's also made me really look at families and dynamics and women's roles in society, it's educated me. Becoming a professional [in addition to being wife and mother] has really educated me as far as worldliness and I can really start to see different levels of people because of that. Not that I'm better by any means, but maybe I have experiences that are different so I can see things in a different way sometimes.

Doreen shared a gain in personal understanding through engaging in her many life role experiences:

I think there is the advantage of experiencing things and being out there and growing and changing, and finding out more of who you are. I mean if you didn't have all of the roles and you had just one role of mother or whatever, or a stay-at-home kind of mother like mine, she's not going to be as varied and diverse and know herself as well, I don't think.

Sherry shared some specific problem-solving skills that she gained through her multiple role experiences. She acknowledged that this learning could only come from engaging in her various life roles; she would not have learned this skill otherwise. She summarizes her learning process in the following:



Because I've learned so much that I wouldn't have learned otherwise. And the biggest thing that I've learned is how to solve problems. So I've learned a lot about that, I wasn't a very good problem-solver before, but I find some of those same ways of problem-solving at home with him I can bring into the workplace with students and figure out how to, you know, discover a solution rather than a parting of the ways. It's very educational.

### Summary of Self-Enhancing Aspects of Multiple Role Experiences

Throughout the interviews, women described many self-enhancing aspects of engaging in multiple roles. These perceived benefits clustered in several theme areas discussed in the preceding section. Table 4.2 summarizes these themes and illuminates the frequency with which women spontaneously articulated these personal gains.

Table 4.2

### Summary of Self-Enhancing Aspects of Multiple Role Experiences

Self-Enhancing Theme	Frequency
Exposure to New Activities Builds Support Network	13
Creates Multi-Dimensional Identity	12
Enhances Self-Competencies	11
Builds Self-Esteem	6
Provides New Learning Opportunities	4

## Self-Restrictive Aspects of Multiple Role Experiences

The women in this study also illuminated limitations or drawbacks to engaging in multiple roles. The focus of this section attends to several themes which emerged in the data as these women described the self-restrictive aspects of being a multiple role woman. Over three-fourths of the women cited how their range of personal choices, with particular attention to their level of socializing, have been restrained. Over half of the women described how their many life roles routinized or scheduled their lifestyle in a more constrictive manner. Half of the participants mentioned that they experienced an increased level of stress or internal pressure as a result of their multiple roles. While only two women specifically labeled a personal drawback of "depression," almost two-thirds of the participants described symptoms of depression as being self-restrictive aspects of their multiple role experiences (e.g., concentration problems, fatigue, low self-esteem, low energy, depression.)

### Inhibits Socializing / Restricts Personal Choices

Several women who described how their personal choices were restricted in response to their multiple life responsibilities gave specific attention to the decreased amount of socializing they experienced. Examples of this perceived limitation include:

So I spend a lot less time with friends who have been really good friends, but also because they are really good friends I know that when the day comes that we can get back together, nothing will have suffered because of that bond. (Patricia)

I don't know, our life is very small. We don't do a lot of socializing with other people, very few people, because that's the type of person that my husband is, and I would have a lot of friends and a lot of, I don't know, like going to parties at our house or really more of an upbeat type of lifestyle... I would

love to live in the city. I think that would be exciting, but that would never be a choice... I would never live out here. If I didn't have any kids and I didn't have a husband, I would live in [major eastern metropolitan area] or I would live in [other major eastern metropolitan area.] Anywhere in a big city, I like that.  
(Pam)

As these women share the limitations on their personal choices, two themes emerge in how they describe the impact of this phenomenon on themselves. Several women immediately follow their account of their personal restrictions with an explanation of how their priorities have shifted in response to their multiple roles, subsequently buffering their self-esteem from any perceived losses resulting from these personal limitations. Daphne shares:

I would like to do some of the things that I would want to do, once the children are grown. I have my own interests in arts and music and things like that, too. And some of those things I have put on the back burner while I'm doing other things with the children. But they are not as important to me presently. They are still important to me, but they are put aside for a while. So some of my future thought is that I'll do that later. So I have to categorize some of the things that I can and cannot do, so some of that is a drawback, I guess.

Other women describe the impact of these limitations in personal choices without a reference to a change in their priorities. These women describe a sense of personal loss or negative feelings resulting from these restrictions. Denise shares how she feels that there are many parts of her life that are "on hold" as a result of her multiple role involvement. She also implies that she feels less competent and "useful as an overall person" in her current roles of wife, parent, worker and student. She conveys these sentiments in the following



Before I was a wife and mother, I was writing plays and writing a book, I was working on a novel. I was doing whatever jobs I could do to hold it together and still be able to do these other things. There was much more freedom. I felt more useful as an overall person in the world. But not now; I feel secluded, sequestered, there are too many things on hold in my life.... Yeah, I feel limited because I still have this tremendous desire to write and I can't find the time, I can't find the time, I can't do enough of it. I feel very frustrated right now. It's like I'm good with the kids and I'm there for them but I'm frustrated by trying to be a good mother and still take care of what I really need to do for myself to be a complete person. So I feel fragmented.

### Creates More Structure / Poses Scheduling Challenges

Over half of the women reported that engaging in multiple roles tended to "routinize" or schedule their lives, resulting in perceptions of a more planned or structured lifestyle. Paulette shares her perceptions of how her life has become more regulated by the following:

It makes it much more monitored and scheduled than it would be otherwise. I tend to be more of an impulsive person and one that just does whatever the whim takes me, but I don't live that way.

Within this more structured lifestyle, several women specify some of their personal drawbacks, ranging from feeling torn when one needs to be engaged in one role activity but one would prefer to be engaged in another (e.g., wanting to be able to be two places at once) to feeling personally restricted by not being able to live a lifestyle congruent with their personality preferences. Daphne shares the remorse and internal conflict she feels when faced with required work commitments interfering with family activities:

Adjusting my schedule at work is a problem at times with the children because they might have lessons or meetings that they

are going to. Sports and things like that, you have to work around that. A drawback is being gone on significant nights when they [the family] might have things going on or just be working hard all week and wanting to kick back and spend some family time without the school books, without the other activities and just sit there and be with each other and play games together, but my schedule says that this is the night that you have to go into work. Sometimes that is very disappointing, I know that they are all able to relax and be together and I'm missing out and I'm sad not to be there, but it's just that there is no way around that. I can't go in any other night, the night is here and I'm gone. And so I feel some pangs of sadness because I know what they are doing, they are probably at home having some popcorn and soda and I feel some sadness because I am not there.

Pam describes how her life has been much more centered on one geographic location around a prescribed set of activities than it probably would have been had she made other choices around her role activities. She reveals this more grounded orientation as being counter to her own more impulsive, spontaneous personality traits. She also attributes the transition to a more "restricted" lifestyle as occurring with the birth of their first child and the subsequent choices made to provide for their growing family. This couple had been married without children for about seven years before launching their family, which currently includes five children. This woman shares her perspective on how her structured lifestyle resulting from her participation in the roles of wife, mother and paid worker has been somewhat incongruent with her personality orientation in the following manner:

My lifestyle is much more in one place. I think I would be doing, I don't know if I would even be in this particular area or feel free to move to other places and try different things, I've been doing this for 15 years and I sort of feel stuck. Compared to if I didn't have any kids, I would have let go of this business and I would have done something different. I would definitely

challenged myself in lots of different physical settings. I mean, I know what I'm doing is what I've always wanted to do, and I love what I do. But to do the same thing year after year in the same place is not for me. So we've [my husband and I] become really restricted in what we do. But then when she was born, it was like, I had to work and I had to provide or help provide for her financially.

### Increases Level of Stress

About half of the women in this study gave examples of how their participation in multiple roles resulted in an increased level of stress. Many of these women cited drawbacks of their multiple roles as a potential for burnout, a source of continual worries and anxiety, or a cause of frustration and confusion over decision-making. Within these descriptions, the common theme of increased stress or personal pressure over the management of their multiple role commitments emerged. Examples of this theme include:

Burnout, if you're in all of these roles and you're caring more about how other people see you rather than what's going on inside, you're gonna burn out and it's gonna be crazy... The craziness of the fast pace and having to run home from here [her workplace] and do mom and then run out of there and do professor and then run out of there and do partner, and it's like, it doesn't give you a lot of time to just be. (Doreen)

It's been more and more worries. Just more worries. I guess I wasn't or if I'm that type of person who can actually handle it. I don't mind helping other people with their problems, but I don't like problems that really have to deal with me. (Stella)

These women describe how the increased stress, internal pressure, increased worries and frustrations can result in feelings of confusion over how to manage conflicting role obligations. Many women express the sentiment that there never seems to be enough time in the day to complete everything that they would like to do, so they are engaged



in a continual process of decision-making and prioritizing over where to focus their energies. Patricia conveys this process and alludes to an additional drawback in that she feels a lack of support from her husband with regard to managing these "crunch times" when multiple role commitments conflict:

So the disadvantage would be just during the crunch times when whatever you decide to spend your time doing you are always conscious of the others that need to be done, so it's kind of an internal pressure or stress and, for me... there's a sense in which I'm doing it really all by myself because my daughter is too young to understand it. And my husband chooses not to [help] and it would be nice to have someone who would be understanding about what it all feels like when it's happening, but that evidently doesn't happen right now.

In addition to the frustration and stress of managing their various roles, several women describe the source of their stress stemming from fears and worries about living in our current society (e.g., rising crime, alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, health concerns).

It's a constant worry, a constant worry. It's worry if you're doing it right, worry again if [children] are going to be OK, especially in the world that we live in now. It's constant work; there's no rest from it, I don't think. Someone is always sick, which, again, thank God I have a boss who understands this. And it's a constant worry when [the children] are out of my sight, if they are going to be alright. You only have to pick up the newspaper and read about things that happen to children.  
(Diane)

Denise describes an internal fear of suffering from a nervous breakdown which could result from the increased stress and pressure of her multiple roles "colliding into each other." She expresses a sense of internal doubt of her own personal competency in managing her multiple roles, particularly with regard to the increased level of stress:

Because at times in your life when there is maybe something extra stressful going on like you don't know where your marriage is standing, or you're about to graduate, and if the two stresses are colliding into each other, then there's this fear involved that you think, 'What if I lose it all at once?' I have this big fear right now that graduation night or something, I'm going to be, I don't know where I'm gonna, in my head I feel like, 'What if I'm just walking away forgetting something? What if I have a nervous breakdown or lose my memory on graduation night because of all these goals?' I'm afraid that I can't reach them or something.

### Increases Depressive Symptoms

In reviewing the perceptions of the women in this study with regard to the self-restrictive aspects of their role experiences, many women illuminated symptoms of depression within their comments. The most frequently cited depressive symptom is increased fatigue or lethargy; another frequently cited symptom is a lack of energy or motivational difficulties. Two women actually identified "depression" as a drawback resulting from multiple role involvement. Denise clarifies her perceptions of the negative impact of her multiple role experiences by the following:

I only have so much energy and there are days that I am so tired that I thank God that my work is something that I already know so I can just robot through it because I'm too tired. There are days that I have to go through it in my sleep almost... [Some other disadvantages to being a multiple role woman include:] Lack of focus, maybe. Easily distracted. Trouble concentrating. There's danger of getting depressed because there might be some certain aspect of myself that's maybe, possibly, terribly neglected, that's an important part of myself that wants to be fed, and that is starving, for instance, the poet or the writer, that I've had to put aside. That is getting angry with me that could be part of that rage that suddenly tumbles over in the wrong situation because of it's been put on hold.

Other examples of depressive symptomology resulting from multiple role experiences include:

Sometimes it's just plain tiring, sometimes you would like to say, 'I don't want to do it for a couple of days. I'd like a rest.' Sometimes that would be nice. You don't always get the rest when you need it. That's the hard part. (Penny)

You don't have enough energy and enough nurturing and enough love and caring to do each one all the time well. With physically, mentally, emotionally, it's impossible to do them all well all the time. (Pam)

### Summary of Self-Restrictive Aspects of Multiple Role Experiences

In reviewing the interviews of the women in this study, several themes of self-restrictive aspects of multiple role experiences emerge. The previous sections revealed these themes, with illustrative excerpts from these women's personal experiences.

Table 4.3 displays the frequency of these themes.

Table 4.3

### Summary of Self-Restrictive Aspects of Multiple Role Experiences

Self-Restrictive Theme	Frequency
Inhibits Socializing / Restricts Personal Choices	11
Increases Depressive Symptoms	10
Creates More Structure / Poses Scheduling Challenges	8
Increases Level of Stress	7



## Resources for Role Management

The women in this study illuminated numerous resources which enhanced their ability to manage their multiple role responsibilities. These women were quick to acknowledge the many sources of support, both internal and external, which aid them. The most frequently given resource mentioned by almost three-fourths of these women was an internal process of "keeping things in perspective." Half of the women noted the importance of using outside support and asking for help in managing their multiple responsibilities. One third of the women mentioned the use of time management or organizational tools aided them in this process. Other less frequently cited resources included being flexible with role demands, prioritizing their responsibilities, and keeping their roles separate from one another.

### Internal Resource: Keeping Things in Perspective

For many of these women, their strongest source of support came from within themselves. By choosing to "keep things in perspective" they gave themselves permission to attend to their own needs, accept their own inadequacies, allow themselves to make compromises and keep on doing their best in the process. These women noted that they weren't perfect, nor was it healthy for them to strive to be. Moreover, they noted the inner strengths which emerged through their multiple role experiences which supported them in managing the many demands of their lives.

Sherry talks about the importance of keeping things in perspective for herself by grounding herself in a realistic self-appraisal. She describes this internal processing as a

great resource for herself as it aided her in determining how she can manage her responsibilities without becoming too overwhelmed. She states:

I think it's difficult, I think it's very challenging and I think we women have to make so many more decisions than our mothers did or our grandmothers did. And I think it's important that we make them carefully, and I also think it's important that we don't get overwhelmed, that we don't have to pull up the slack for absolutely everything; we're not superwomen and I think, we don't need to be.... So that's what really made me realize, when I started accepting who I really was and my own limitations, then I started realizing what I could do and what I couldn't do. And that took a long time to figure out.

Doreen describes her internal perspective-taking by noting the importance of attending to her own needs. This allows her to feel more grounded or centered and, again, aids her in managing the many responsibilities in her life. She comments:

I think that you need to have a very strong sense of self to be able to [manage your multiple roles.] To be able to make sure that you're in touch with what is going on internally and not be externally-oriented or it's not going to work for you. You also need to take time for yourself. That's what I have found that I need for me, to not be so worried about what is going on externally, but to be more centered in on what is going on internally and that all sort of falls into place, the external stuff all falls into place. But if I don't take care of that core, it's not going to work for me. And I think that taking time to be by myself and to rejuvenate and to get your energy back is very important.

Others describe internal resources which help them to keep their multiple demands in perspective. These internal resources are readily accessible and can be tailored to fit the needs of any given situation. Several women give examples of how they use their internal thought processes to aid their role management. Polly describes this in the following:

I think it's just the inner resource and the knowing that this is something that is a part of me and all of the struggles I am going through and have gone through are part of something that I want. I have chosen to be a part of; no one has told me to do this. And there are enough positive aspects about it that continue to support and nurture that choice.... I guess I have a reservoir of hopes and dreams, of warmth and satisfaction, of love that continues to be there. And I draw upon it when I need to, and I know it's always there. So when things are down, or when things are hard, or when I'm frustrated, it's there.

She later continues to describe the importance of attending to her own energy level in order to effectively manage her role demands:

It's a consuming role and if I'm not attentive to my level of resources whether it's physical, spiritual, social... I can be tapped out and be in a position where I'm vulnerable. So a disadvantage is also having to be aware of how these roles are affecting me at this point in my life and what kind of adjustment I need to make so that I can get past this difficult period of time, and maybe making some decisions that are not necessarily comfortable, but making them knowing that that is the way that I can pull through to make it to this next stage. So I think it's a very consuming position to be in.

Daphne gives an example of how her internal patience facilitates her ability to manage her role responsibilities. She illustrates how she is able to keep things in perspective for herself by utilizing her internal resources in the following:

I really feel that I am a patient person and that sometimes that fosters further patience when I feel that I'm ready to snap and yell inappropriately [at the children.] I'll say, 'Wait a minute, you've felt that you have patience with them, let's keep it going a little bit longer here, they're just being kids. They're going to be immature, hang onto your anger and frustration or whatever it is.'



Finally, Susan captures the sentiments of many of the women in this project by her succinct words of self-advice, “My own feeling is that you can never be the best [at managing all of your roles], but you just have to keep working at it.”

#### External Resource: Using Outside Support

Half of the women in this study acknowledged the importance of using outside support on managing their multiple role responsibilities. The sources of outside support range from sharing responsibilities with family members, to enlisting the support of friends and neighbors, to utilizing support of various social service agencies. Others mentioned using professional cleaning services, babysitting services, and quality childcare as facilitating their ability to manage the many demands of their life roles. For Denise, outside support has been invaluable to her in managing her different role responsibilities, particularly with regard to her children. Two of her three boys had been physically abused as children and currently are experiencing difficulties in high school. She acknowledges the support of many outside sources in managing her multiple roles as being pivotal in preventing her from engaging in abusive behavior:

I'm seeking help all over the place, all kinds of support groups, therapy, family therapy. I just have to seek outside help for that [family problems/school problems/lack of husband's support], support groups, whatever, because I cannot allow it to get physical because that would just be too bad.

Other women describe different sources of outside support while noting how they can continue to feel internally in control, despite the necessity of seeking outside assistance.

The following comments illustrate this pattern:

I think that for the most part that I'm able to manage it and do OK with it, but there also have been many downsides to it, but I

also have a sense that when I hit that downside and things seem really crazy and all over the place and out of control, then for me, I usually need to process it with somebody and that can be my husband or a couple close friends that I have, and just the talking it out can help me sort out if I need to do something different, or sometimes even the act of talking it out can help put it in more perspective and give back the balance. And that's why the people here have been great, just to have people who will hear that story and listen to it and they obviously have no solutions, but just hearing it out and acknowledging that, 'yes, you're headed for a horrible day and you'll get through it and you'll move on tomorrow and let's hope it settles.' Or being more helpful and saying, 'are there ways that you can organize it better?' so I think that's helpful for me. (Sylvia)

There are times that I don't feel as comfortable with the multiple roles and I've learned over the years through experience that if something is not right that the only one to do something about it is yourself. If it means to fix the problem then try to fix it. If it means to talk to somebody about fixing it or to delegate and to get some help, then delegate. And who is the one with the problem, if it's me, then I need to speak up....So, no man is an island and we can help each other, whether it's our children in training them in how to handle multiple things, or whether it's a peer and they might struggle a week from now with some other things. They all either need help from us or can give us that help now if we are in need. (Daphne)

Both Sylvia and Daphne note the importance of outside support in managing their multiple role experiences. For Sylvia, using outside support aids her in keeping things in perspective and identifying new strategies for managing her role responsibilities. For Daphne, she's identified that she can utilize outside resources to manage her roles for her.

### Using Time Management / Organizational Tools

One third of the women mentioned time management or other organizational skills as being helpful in managing their multiple roles. Some utilize planners or

calendars while others develop their own organizational system. Others describe how they organize or prioritize their role responsibilities. Susan refers to her scheduler as 'her Bible,' indicating the value it holds in her daily living:

My schedule planner [helps me manage my multiple roles.] I live by that thing as a Bible. Everybody's everything is in there. Organization, it really does fall back to organization.

In describing organizational skills as resources to role management, several women gave examples of how this is manifested for them. Sherry describes a process of trying to "even it all out" by balancing the amount of time and attention given to each particular role:

And you're always changing your focus, 'well this is more important, no, this is more important, no, this...' so you try to even it all out, but it doesn't always work.

Penny describes how she prioritizes her various responsibilities in the context of planning a holiday party:

Say, if you decide to have parties like I did at the holiday time, well, then that's when you focus in on what needs to be done, the cleaning and everything else, and you just do it. And when you're busy with all of those other roles, well, then you concentrate on things like you need to have groceries in the house, you have to have a certain number of basic meals that are done that can be reheated, you need the laundry, and preferably a clean bathroom and clean dishes... And those really, those... you can survive with the rest being somewhat chaotic or lots chaotic as long as those things that are most important to you, you can find, and everybody else in the house can find them too.

Doreen describes an inverse relationship between organizational skills and stress, indicating that as organization skills improve, the level of stress decreases. She illustrates this by her own personal experience:



I need more time, being better organized. I'm not very organized, and that's really been a thorn in my side. If I were more organized, I'm sure that my time would be better spent. I need to have better organization. I mean, I'm the kind that gets up in the morning and you have to dig through your clothes to find out what you can wear, so why couldn't I just put those out the day before! I spend a lot of anxious energy on things that could have been organized to begin with, and then I would have avoided the stress altogether.

### Summary of Resources for Role Management

In reviewing the interviews of the women in this study, several themes of resources for managing multiple roles emerge. The previous sections revealed these themes, with illustrative examples from these women's experiences. Table 4.4 summarizes these themes and displays the frequency of these responses.

Table 4.4

### Summary of Resources for Role Management

Resources	Frequency
Internal Resource: Keeping Things in Perspective	11
External Resource: Using Outside Support	8
Using Time Management / Organizational Tools	5

## Hindrances to Role Management

In addition to sharing their resources, these women also identified factors which hindered their ability to effectively manage their multiple roles. Frequently, women would spontaneously identify their difficulties without prompting. Over half of the women mentioned a lack of energy as being detrimental to their ability to manage their role responsibilities. Over one-third cited a lack of control and just as many indicated a difficulty in getting started as impeding their role management. Other internal impediments include: feeling guilty, having a negative attitude, and worrying about other's opinions of them.

Women also identified external influences which hindered their role management. Almost all of the women indicated that not having enough time was a major impediment to effectively managing their roles. Other external hindrances include: lack of partner, family and extended family support, having too many outside demands, inadequate income, and lack of quality baby-sitting or housekeeping services.

First the internal hindrances to role management will be revealed. The external influences will be covered next, followed by a summary of the hindrances to role management.

### Lack of Energy

Half of the women interviewed mentioned a lack of energy or increased fatigue caused by their numerous roles as being detrimental to their role management. Stella reports that if she had more energy, she'd be more effective at managing all of her responsibilities, "More energy on my part, because I think that sometimes I wind down

too fast.” Penny reveals that her multiple responsibilities are physically and emotionally draining, to the point of impacting the quality of her performance:

Sometimes it's just plain tiring, sometimes I would like to say, "I don't want to do it for a couple days. I need a rest." Sometimes that would be nice. You don't always get the rest when you need it. That's the hard part. I think sometimes you're pushing yourself and you're staying up late and you're not accomplishing a thing.

### Lack of Perceived Control

Over one-third of the women shared a perceived loss of control as adversely affecting their ability to manage their many tasks. Patricia expressed how she feels limited in the amount of control she has over her own life, due to the many life roles she holds. For her, the roles appear to dictate how she is to be, thus choosing for her the path that her life will take. She describes her life as being on "its own snowball path" due to the influence of her multiple roles:

Because the multiple roles feel that my control over my life is limited and it's like on its own snowball path, kind of winding by itself, regardless of whether that's what I'd be consciously choosing.

Diane also expresses feeling out of control or "at the mercy" of the demands of her multiple roles. She describes her perspective in the following:

It's beyond my control. I have no control. I feel at the mercy of [outside forces] and that, that's across the board in the multi-faceted roles that I have; the this sense of a loss of personal control, of individual control.

For these women, there is a sense of a loss of personal control that hinders their ability to manage their life responsibilities. In some ways, this appears to perpetuate itself for the multiple roles make these women feel less in control, subsequently hindering their



ability to manage their roles, which results in more external demands making them feel even less in control, and so on.

### Difficulty Getting Started

Over one-third of these women also described difficulty initiating tasks or determining how to proceed in managing their multiple responsibilities as a hindering factor. These women either had difficulty getting started or expressed an impediment in their inability to prioritize or deciding upon which roles to attend. Stella shares that her inability to prioritize adversely affects her role management. She describes feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of decisions and choices she must make in her numerous tasks. The following excerpt captures her sentiments:

Maybe I haven't learned how to set priorities in order to do them and all the time I try to do a 'to do' list, it's always been whatever I get to, that's what I'll accomplish. I think now it just seems like, even shopping and stuff, you have to go to too many places to do the shopping, there's so many places and so many choices, that you don't have enough time. I haven't been into a store just to relax and shop in ages because I don't feel like I have the time to do that. And that's just me, I like to be busy, but I don't like to be overwhelmed.

Denise identifies that she is currently confused about her priority roles. She acknowledges that she currently is trying to attend to all of her roles equally, with the same degree of energy and commitment. However, she realizes that this is an unrealistic expectation and impossible for her to accomplish. Thus, she recognizes that if she could only prioritize her roles, then she could manage them more effectively. She states:

I would say that right now I'm a little confused about what my priority roles are. I'm having role confusion as you call it.

Because, I know that I'm supposed to be a mother and I know I'm supposed to have that first, but then, OK, but it's finals and I've gotta be having the students be first, and then, the marriage has got to be somewhere. I've got to decide something here, I've got to be strong enough to get over them. And so it's like, when people say, 'what are your priorities? If you'd just get that straight, you'd be all right!' I'd say, 'Tell me, I don't know.' Because I'm feeling like I've put them all in the same level or something. So that's where I feel which ones are first because I'm trying to put it all first.

### Other Internal Influences

The women in this study also identified other internal influences as hindering their ability to manage their roles. One woman shared that her high expectations of herself or "wanting to be perfect" adversely effected her ability to effectively handle her role responsibilities as she never felt "good enough" or competent in her tasks, thus becoming sort of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Other women shared feeling guilty about the choices they made in managing their roles as subsequently hindering their performance. These women acknowledged feeling compelled to live up to others' expectations or the "superwoman" media phenomena with regard to being a multiple role women. Doreen illustrates the detrimental impact of attending to outside expectations by the following:

If you're in all of those roles and you're caring more about how other people see you rather than what's going on inside, you're going to burn out and it's going to be crazy.

Up to this point, the hindrances reviewed have been primarily internal or within themselves. Frequently these women acknowledged these particular personality characteristics or traits as being detrimental. The women in this study also identified external factors which impede their ability to manage their multiple roles. For example,

not having enough time, having too many outside demands, inadequate outside support and other factors were mentioned as hindering role management.

### Lack of Time

Almost all of the women described in some manner how not having enough time hindered their ability to manage all of their role responsibilities. These women expressed that if they had more time, they'd be able to accomplish more, work more effectively, experience less pressure, and, overall, be more successful in role management. Some women speak of how their life experiences dictate how much time is available, while others take ownership in how they chose to spend their time. Sylvia reveals how she perceives her time crunch as being predetermined by the situation, thus outside of her control:

I think its just being so split in time in that it's limited the amount of time that you can put into anything. If I'm in a project here at work and it hits 2:30, it doesn't matter where I'm at in that project, it's done because I have to pick somebody up by 3:30 so there's not a lot of flexibility and that makes it difficult. The amount of time that you can give to something a lot of times is predetermined and not within your control because of other roles that require you to be doing other things.

Pam gives an example of how women express their own control over time constraints.

She identifies an impediment in her role management as her inability to take time for herself. For her, not placing a priority on her own needs or taking time for herself eventually takes it's toll on her ability to manage her roles effectively. She states:

Not taking time for me, that's it. That's the bottom line. And in any stressful situation, it's not pulling back and allowing myself time to absorb or take time for me. Always pushing, pushing, pushing.



Thus, it appears that for practically all women, a lack of time is a significant impediment on their role management. However, how women experience their control over time seems to vary. Some women feel that time is beyond their control, while others acknowledge their ability to choose how to spend their time despite circumstantial constraints.

### Too Many Outside Demands

About one-third of the women in this project identify too many outside demands as hindering their capacity to manage their roles. They reveal examples of how people, situations, or other external forces require them to respond in certain ways, thus interfering with their intended plans for attending to their multiple roles. Sherry succinctly states that these outside forces determine how she will function in managing her roles:

I just think that a lot of [how you manage your multiple roles] is determined by the outside, by the external obligations to maintain the house, the car, the college. So all of these demands determine how big each role will take. So it doesn't matter what you might wish it might be, the reality of it is determined by these demands.

Stella gives a clear example of how people interfere with her role management:

When people don't bother me, they stay out of my way and they let me do the things that I had planned, as long as I have direction and I know what I'm doing, the minute somebody interrupts me, though, and that's another problem. Sometimes when I'm interrupted, it depends on what the interruption is, that I'll start going that way instead of the way that I should have gone... I can do my house, I can get the chores done, I can do my things at home when I'm home on the days that I have off or I can do other things around it so I can do 15 loads of wash. I mean, I can be superwoman as long as no one interrupts me and I can get all my stuff done. The minute that I have to be

interrupted though, there's a break and then it's very hard to get started again.

### Lack of Partner Support

Several women reveal how the lack of partner support serves as a hindrance to their role management. Three of the five women who mentioned this constraint are currently considering separation from their husbands. They indicated that this lack of support is one of the factors leading them to this decision. With regard to managing their roles, women express sentiments of feeling like they are doing it all themselves or that the distribution of household chores and parenting tasks is "out of balance."

Patricia gives a clear example of how the lack of partner support impedes her capacity to manage her roles:

There's a sense in which I'm doing it really all by myself because my daughter is too young to understand it. He [husband] chooses not to help and it would be nice to have someone who would be understanding about what it all feels like when it's happening, but that evidently doesn't happen right now... It would help very much if the relationship between my husband and I could be resolved, probably one way or the other, maybe to get out of the relationship would solve things for us now. When it becomes a real tense issue, it's very hard to do schoolwork, it's very hard to be with my daughter and it's hard to do anything right. So if I could figure out a way to handle that in the best way for all concerned, I think it would simplify everything.

For her, the lack of partner support has been so great that she's considering separation as a probable solution. Sylvia also expressed a lack of partner support as impeding her ability to manage her roles. She feels that she is handling more of the parenting and household responsibilities than her partner. She expresses her concerns in the following:

I think that if between my husband and I there were more of a balance in terms of what our responsibilities were with the kids, and whether it be just having to keep track of all the stuff the kids need for school and when this needs to be done and that and, it's just all that sort of stuff. If there was more sharing of those kinds of, as well as sort of doing the laundry and doing this, it ends up that he almost needs being directed to do those things. And we haven't been able to work out an arrangement where that feels more shared and his perception may be very different on it. But mine is that it just doesn't feel shared, it feels as though the bulk of the responsibility in terms of the management of the kids and getting all of their stuff done as well as the household maintenance stuff falls more on me.

### Other External Influences

In addition to the hindrances mentioned thus far, women also identified other impediments such a lack of income, inability to find quality baby-sitting, or unexpected emergencies such as sick children, car problems, or other unanticipated external demands. Diane illustrates one example in the following:

To be able to cut down on my work hours, win the lottery, take care of my financial problems... to have more free time and more money.

### Summary of Hindrances to Role Management

The women in this study identified numerous factors as being detrimental to their ability to manage their multiple role responsibilities. These ranged from personality traits or physiological states impacting them internally to circumstantial factors or demands outside of themselves. Almost all of these women cited time, or lack thereof, as being harmful to their role management. Other frequently identified themes include a lack of energy, too many outside demands, lack of control and



difficulty in getting started or maintaining effort toward managing their multiple roles.

Table 4.5 summarizes these internal and external hindrances to role management.

To this point, numerous aspects of women's multiple role experiences have been reviewed. The analysis has covered role definitions, the self-enhancing and self-restrictive aspects of multiple role experiences, and the resources and hindrances of role management. Next the review turns to the themes of how these women negotiate role conflict with their partners. Within this section, role conflict is examined within the context of understanding how these women recognize and experience it, how they attempt to resolve it and the barriers to successful negotiation of role conflict.

Table 4.5

Summary of Hindrances to Role Management

Internal Influences		Frequency
Lack of Energy		8
Lack of Perceived Control		6
Difficulty Getting Started		6
Other Internal Influences		4
External Influences		
Lack of Time		14
Too Many Outside Demands		6
Lack of Partner Support		5
Other External Influences		5

## Negotiating Role Conflict With Partner

For the most part, women shared their experiences in negotiating role conflict when specifically prompted. These women were asked how they negotiated their role conflict with their partners. However, some women spontaneously illustrated how conflict was manifested and resolved within the context of disclosing other aspects of their role experiences (e.g., when asked to describe the drawbacks of being multiple role women, examples of role conflict frequently emerged).

The women in this study illustrated many different strategies to negotiating their role conflict with their partners. Some women chose to resolve the conflict themselves, others negotiated with their partners to problem-solve around their areas of conflict, and a few acknowledged that they tended to avoid conflict altogether. It was not uncommon for a woman to apply more than one approach, depending upon the situation. Likewise, several women illustrated that they had tried numerous strategies in the past, but now chose one particular approach.

### Doing It Herself

Women who opted for resolving conflict by themselves typically developed this strategy after failed attempts at other approaches. These women frequently revealed that they had made previous unsuccessful attempts at problem-solving with their partners around the conflictual issue and now chose to negotiate the conflict independently. Patricia gave numerous examples of her husband's incapacity to follow through in handling child care dilemmas. She described how she and her partner discussed sharing of the parenting and child care responsibilities, but her husband

frequently "forgot to do his share." When asked how she negotiates this conflict with her partner, she replied:

And the only way we end up resolving that is to have to kind of shut myself off emotionally and say, 'obviously he doesn't want to be bothered with this, so let me make plans and get other people to help my daughter and I with what has to be done' and then I'll call on my sister or my mother-in-law or whoever I can and arrange something. So I get this sense of martyrdom that I'm making all of these sacrifices to handle this situation, that probably could be handled a lot more easily. But if I kind of leave it up to him, then it won't necessarily get handled, so I'm kind of on overdrive.

Other manifestations of this approach included those women who felt that they were the ones who typically adjusted or accommodated to their partner's needs, when it came to resolving conflict. Stella illustrated this by:

What I'll try to do is to make it up someplace, so I'll overcompensate like when I am home, I'll say, 'So, now what would you like to do? Do you have any plans?' And I'll always ask him that, 'Do you have any plans? What are you doing? Do you have anything you'd like to do before I go ahead and make any plans?' I'm the one that adjusts to try to accommodate to him.

Other women shared how they became solely responsible for resolving household conflicts out of default. Many women described conflicts emerging around household tasks and familial activities. Since these women were perceived as "organized," "good managers," and skilled in preventing problems, they frequently took the lead in negotiating role conflict. For example, Penny shared that marital conflicts emerged over scheduling issues. Between two careers, an active adolescent, and numerous community commitments, managing the demands of these activities was a frequent source of conflict. In describing how she and her husband managed conflict in their



household, she immediately responded that her efforts at scheduling and coordinating served to prevent a great deal of familial conflict:

Well, I'm the one who is sort of in charge of the schedule. I don't know why, but I am. And what I try to do, is I try to find out from my husband and son, I try to find out what's on the agenda... And then we sort of direct people, there's only three of us, but it works. [I got to be the one who organizes everything because] nobody else did it. It was sort of like the wifely role, and I'm good at it. You get good at it through all the practice. That's basically it.

### Problem-Solving and Compromise

The interviews with most of these women revealed rich examples of how couples successfully negotiated conflict through problem-solving and compromise. These women described how their partners “balanced” or “complemented” them, which served to facilitate their conflict resolution. For Sherry and her husband, they both had different values around extended family relationships. Sherry desired a close-knit relationship with extended family while her husband preferred no relationship whatsoever. In the interview, Sherry used this example to illustrate how she and her partner effectively negotiated conflict:

I think we're able to talk through [our values and conflicts] more. I think we've both been able to give up some of our preconceptions of how things are going to be, for example, 'No, it's not going to be a very tight, strong-knit extended family relationship, it's going to be looser than that.' But we'll still have some sort of relationship with them.

Polly revealed another example of how couples effectively communicated to resolve problems within their relationship. She described how they both had been operating under false, socially-prescribed assumptions, but when they openly discussed their

feelings, they were able to create unique relationship roles that were mutually satisfying. She shares:

And there was a time when I managed the financial needs of the family and it was extremely draining, because that was a role that is typical of women, I had assumed that role, and he had always assumed that that was something that I liked to do. So it was getting past, getting past to the point where we could communicate, that it wasn't something that I enjoyed, but it was a role that women in my culture assumed in a marriage. But it was through discussion that we were able to bridge that, and now he takes care of it because it doesn't push as many buttons for him as it does for me.

Diane gave another example of how she and her husband successfully worked through conflicts within their household by developing a system of “trade-offs.” This system evolved in response to the work demands of this couple. Diane states:

And again when I took this job, it was, he has morning duty. He's Mr. Mom. He's the breakfast and he's making the lunches and he's getting the kids clothed and he's getting them out and getting them on the bus, because I'm not there. On the other end, he comes home everyday and dinner is ready. Even though I've worked all day, that's the exchange. We've traded that off. He can expect that he doesn't have to go grocery shopping; he doesn't have to cook a meal. He has morning duty and I have night duty. So that's another example of how the roles between working and parenting, that we negotiate.

Several women, in describing how they negotiate conflict with their partners through problem-solving, shared how acceptance helped alleviate stress within their marriages. By accepting that conflict was a part of life, these women became partners with their husbands rather than adversaries. Hence they were able to use conflict as a tool to strengthen their relationship and work through problem areas. Daphne illustrates how accepting or allowing conflict to exist benefits their conflict negotiation process:

Well, I think that we allow the conflict to be there and say, 'OK, it's there' instead of saying, 'Shame on you, you shouldn't be thinking about such and such.' I just think that that's the way life is, that we have the multiple roles and we're going to be emotional about any of those roles or we're gonna have to be rational about those and work it through. It's there and it's better that we understand that it's going to be there and allow each other to be where they're at, deal with it, if you can help out then deal with it so that they can be comfortable with or move on to another role that they might feel like, 'OK, c'mon let work go and let's be in the husband and wife role.' We accept the reality of conflict but then move on. You do it in such a way to say, 'Is it possible for you to move on?' and not, 'Move on because I want you to.'

Susan's perceptions reveal a slightly different spin on how she and her partner mutually resolve the conflict in their marriage. She describes periods of time where she and her husband are more 'in sync' with one another and periods of distance or disconnection. During these disconnected times there tends to be more conflict over the routine household chores, such as buying groceries, making meals, doing the laundry, taking out the trash, etc. When asked how she and her partner negotiate these periods of conflict, she noted the context that accompanied conflicts within their relationship. She described these observations in the following manner:

I think we go through highs and lows, in our family and in our relationship. In the marriage, I think we kind of, I think of a song by Harry Chapin; it's called the Circle Song and it has to do with relationships and people kind of fading in and out and I think that we kind of do that. We're really close for a period of time and then we kind of drift and then we kind of find each other again and it comes through one of us saying, 'you know, we really haven't been together emotionally or physically in a long time. We need to make more time for us again.' And then we kind of do that and that happens for a number of months or a chunk of time and then you kind of drift again and then one of us kinda pulls the other one back or we pull each other back. That seems to be kind of how it works for us.



For Susan and her partner, the ebb and flow of connectedness appears to mediate how conflict is experienced within their relationship. The act of attending to each other's emotional and physical needs within the relationship serves to reduce the negative impact of their conflict.

### Avoid or Ignore Conflict

The women who detailed how they tended to avoid or ignore conflict with their partners also described tense, volatile relationships with their spouses. For these women, avoiding the conflict altogether was an adaptive coping strategy. These women learned that addressing conflict, no matter what strategies they employed, tended to yield even greater conflict in return. Denise observed a pattern within her marriage that they tended to ignore conflict until they could no longer do so, and then they both would 'explode.' She later described some effective problem-solving strategies that she and her partner learned through family therapy. However, she acknowledged that she and her husband would frequently revert back to the avoid/explode pattern of resolving conflict, particularly when under stress. She described this as:

Mostly we ignore conflict until it gets to be too much and then we like explode. The pattern is that all of the sudden he's cleaning and I'm mad that he's disappointed in my not being able to keep it in the way that he likes it. And then I get enraged because he thinks that I should be a certain way and I'm not and I can't be other than what I am. But then we need to explode for a while and then we need to go out for a walk and talk about it, but we're still struggling on this pattern. It's always the same issues... money, cleaning, and the kids thing... it's his methods; we object to each other's methods.

## Summary of Strategies for Negotiating Role Conflict With Partner

The women in this study shared several approaches to negotiating their role conflict with their partners. Most of the women utilized problem-solving and compromise to resolve conflicts. Others adopted strategies of resolving the conflict by themselves while a few ignored or avoided the conflict areas altogether. It was not uncommon for a woman to apply more than one approach, depending upon the situation. Table 4.6 summarizes the frequency of these conflict negotiation approaches.

Table 4.6

### Summary of Themes of Negotiating Role Conflict

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	Frequency
Doing It Herself	5
Problem-Solving and Compromise	12
Avoid or Ignore Conflict	5

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### Developmental Analysis

The next level of analysis involved reviewing the interviews in light of the participant's stage of self-knowledge development. As the researcher was blind to the participant's developmental stage initially, the author received the self-knowledge stage coding for each interview after the completion of the thematic analysis. The interviews were then grouped according to developmental stage and reviewed again. During this

analysis, the author gave particular attention to the themes identified during the first level of analysis, to determine whether developmental stage could shed light on the differences noted.

Self-knowledge development is the framework for this next level of analysis. The women in this project reflected two major stages of self-knowledge; the Situational stage ( $n = 5$ ) and the Pattern stage ( $n = 10$ ). Five women were at the Situational 2 stage of self-knowledge, five were at Pattern 1, and five were at Pattern 2. None of the participants in this study were at the Elemental or Transformational stages of self-knowledge development. Refer back to Table 4.1 to identify the participant's stage of self-knowledge development.

Tables 4.7 - 4.13 outline the multiple role themes according to developmental stage. The developmental stages represented by participants in this project include Situational 2, Pattern 1, and Pattern 2 stages. Situational Self-Knowledge demonstrates the person's ability to express a more organized description of a memorable event. Although the general phenomenon described is primarily external, the individual may begin to provide global information about inner states. People can make links between causation and actions, and between actions and inner states, and, at Situation 2, they can begin to coordinate these components into an organized, coherent event. However, this self-understanding is specific to each situation and patterns of responding across situations are not recognized.

Pattern Self-Knowledge allows the knower to describe an internal response that is consistent across situations or social contexts. At this stage, people make predictive



statements about how they would react in a given situation, knowing what they know about their own internal dispositions. The difference between Pattern 1 and Pattern 2 is found in the sophistication of the self-understanding in these patterns of internal responses. At Pattern 1, the descriptive detail is generally global and undifferentiated and there is no reference to internal intrapsychic conflict or self-responsibility for the patterned responses. At Pattern 2, evidence of internal conflict and/or internal conversation emerges. In addition, the pattern description has become much more integrated and interconnected with the self playing an active role in shaping these connections.

Due to the voluminous data, only the salient aspects of these tables will be reported in detail. The progression of developmental analysis begins with how the women in this study conceptualize or define their multiple roles, followed by a look at the self-enhancing and self-restrictive aspects of their roles. Next the resources and hindrances to role management are reviewed closing with a discussion of role negotiation approaches. A summary table of key developmental findings is found in Table 4.13.

### Self-Knowledge Development and Role Conceptualization

In reviewing how the women in this project defined their multiple roles within this developmental framework, several issues warrant further examination. The way in which these women conceptualized being a multiple role woman appears to vary depending upon their stage of self-knowledge development. When reviewing each of the roles of wife, mother, and paid worker separately, the developmental influence

upon their role conceptualizations was not evident. However, Table 4.7 clearly illuminates several developmentally sensitive themes in how these women conceptualize being a multiple role woman

#### Internally-Derived Role Definitions Versus Externally-Adopted Role Definitions.

Women's stage of self-knowledge development correlates with how women conceptualize their multiple roles. As discussed earlier, internally-derived role definitions are authored by the participant. The attributes of this definitions may come from societal expectations, family influences, outside modeling or uniquely created by the participant. However, regardless of the source of the attributes of role definition, the participant clearly takes ownership, or identifies herself as the creator in designing her own role definition. Women whose role definitions are internally-derived demonstrate a sense of personal agency in choosing the language of their role definitions.

All of the women at the two levels of the Pattern stage of self-knowledge development conceptualized their roles by internally-derived mechanisms; two of the women at the Situational stage viewed their roles in this manner. For Doreen, the meaning of being a multiple role woman clearly rests within her. When asked what she would want to convey to her daughter or other women about being a multiple role woman, she responded:

I think that you need to have a very strong sense of self to be able to manage multiple roles. You need to make sure that you're in touch with what is going on internally and not be externally-oriented or it's not going to work for you. It's also important to make sure that you take time for yourself. That's what I've found that I need for me, to not be so worried about

what is going on externally, but to be more centered in what is going on internally and that all sort of falls into place; the external stuff all falls into place.

Table 4.7

### Conceptualization of Multiple Role Woman and Self-Knowledge Development

Multiple Role Theme	Situational 1	Pattern 1	Pattern 2
Conceptualization of Roles			
Internally-derived role definitions	2	5	5
Externally-adopted role definitions	3	2	1
"Should be" language	5	0	0
"Choose to be" language	1	5	5

Earlier in the interview, Doreen gave an internally-derived definition of being a mother as illustrated in the following:

The role for me is being attentive and aware and present. I don't see myself as the traditional mother, I'm not the cookie baker that stays at home and knits and does all of that. I think that for me I'm very dedicated to helping my children get to a place where they can be independent and be exactly who they were meant to be in this life. And my role in that is to sort of be a guide and as someone who can offer suggestions, and love, and nurturing and validation. I think its very important to be a validator as a mother. And I provide for them, of course. But I tend to look at the higher needs, rather than the lower needs, like the safety needs, of course those are sort of given, like you clothe them and feed them and put a roof over their head. But at this stage in the game with an 18-year-old and a 14-year-old, it's more of a guide. It's more of being present for them and



accepting of them and validating them as people, which isn't always easy, but that's kind of how I see my role.

Externally-adopted role definitions are evident when the participant acknowledges that the meaning of the roles are dictated by some source outside of herself. Circumstantial constraints, societal expectations, family influences, and role models actually define role expectations, with the participant passively accepting their meanings rather than actively taking ownership for the meaning-making process. Three of the five women at the Situational stage of self-knowledge development exhibit this method of role definition while only three of the ten women at the two Pattern stages of self-knowledge development. Sylvia illustrates an example of an externally-adopted conceptualization of her roles by the following:

And then there are times when it can be totally overwhelming because you're so split and so torn and it can feel like everyone is sort of placing demands and has expectations... The amount of time that you can give to something a lot of times is predetermined and not within your control because of other roles that require you to do certain things.

For Sylvia, the control for the meaning of her roles is outside of herself. Her language does not suggest that she has crafted the meanings and expectations of her roles; rather they are mandated by something outside of herself.

It appears from the data that stage of self-knowledge development is related to how women conceptualize their multiple roles, with women at higher stages of cognitive development manifesting more personal agency in crafting the meaning of their multiple roles. Women at the pattern stages of self-knowledge development demonstrate ownership in their role conceptualizations and indicate an awareness of

how their inner states are connected with their external experiences. Women at the Situational stage of self-knowledge development do not reveal this level of self-awareness; they tend to passively adopt external definitions for their roles.

### “Should be” Language Versus “Choose to be” Language

Another interesting developmental difference is illustrated in the type of language women use in describing their role responsibilities. “Should be” language refers to language in which the participant acknowledges that she ‘should’ or ‘must’ or ‘needs to’ respond in a particular manner. This implies that she believes that her behavior is being judged by some external measure. “Choose to be” language refers to language in which the person acknowledges that she takes responsibility for her actions. In these interviews, all of the women at the Situational stage of self-knowledge development utilize “should be” language while none of the women at the Pattern stages of self-knowledge development use this language. The latter groups of respondents use “choose to be” language in describing their experiences.

An example of “should be” language includes:

Well, if I ever feel like the house should be clean or everything should be done, that makes it more difficult. Or if I get into feeling like I should be doing everything at once, but I’m lucky that my husband doesn’t play the other side of that, he doesn’t think that the house and the cooking and the cleaning is any more my job than his job. (Sophia)

When asked to describe what it means to be a multiple role woman, Sophia responded in a manner characteristic of the Situational stage of self-knowledge development by stating, “I never thought about it. Is it something that I should have thought about?”

An excellent example of “choose to be” language is illustrated by Paulette’s chronological account of her various life roles:

I made some real conscious choices along the way that were very unpopular and would be even more unpopular now. If I had made different choices, and I’m going to have to go back and give you an example, if I had made different choices to fit in with what I hear society is saying, I would not have been happy with myself. Other people would have spoken better of me, but I would not have been happy with myself. I chose to stay at home until every one of my kids was in kindergarten, there are seven years between my oldest and my youngest... so I was home like fourteen years because I did not want any baby-sitters bringing up my kids... Then I decided that when they were in kindergarten that what I wanted to do was work in a job that I was always home when they were home, so I took a job as an aid in a school system. And then when I felt they were ready to do without me, I moved on to a job that had different vacations and different times. Even graduate school, I picked my graduate school by when I could be home with them. I don’t think that when people get married and choose to have children that they think all of that out. They get trapped in other people’s expectations, they get trapped in money needs, they get trapped in a lot of things and then they don’t always carry out their roles the way they would choose to if they had thought it out and really figured out what was going to be comfortable for them.

Another woman’s comments illustrate the possibility of an additional position in regard to “should be” or “choose to be” language. There is a transitional nature in Sylvia’s language, as she reveals a sense that she “should” respond in a particular manner while at the same time, she is beginning to recognize her own choice in how she defines herself in her roles. Within the context of the interview, there was an element of tentativeness in her voice, perhaps indicating her uncertainty in exclusively accepting her choice in defining her life roles.

In the back of my mind I think I should always be there [for my children] when the right moment would hit that they would need



me.... The biggest drawback of being a mother for me was getting over my preconceptions of what it was going to be like. Because I had grown up on television series where everybody was happy all of the time, and I don't know, I had this very weird feeling about, I'd have this baby and I'd bring it home and it would be mine and I could do with it as I wished... I've always found that I've done unconventional things with my kids. And my friends always thought that 'I don't think you should do that. That's not going to work out.' And then when it does work out, they would say to me, 'how did you do that?' I don't really have that many people to share with the results [of my parenting style], because I sort of see this disapproving look. But I'm OK with it. (Sylvia)

### Self-Knowledge Development and Aspects of Multiple Role Experiences

Next the self-enhancing and self-restrictive aspects of multiple role experiences are covered within this framework. Particular attention is directed toward how women experience their multi-dimensional identity. Two developmentally-moderated drawbacks (i.e., Creates More Structure / Poses Scheduling Difficulties and Increase Level of Stress) are also discussed in this section. See Table 4.8 for a summary of the developmental analysis of the self-enhancing aspects of multiple role experiences and Table 4.9 for the parallel analysis of the self-restrictive aspects.

#### Self-Enhancing Aspect: Creates Multi-Dimensional Identity

This theme warrants closer examination, not because there are developmental differences in whether women acknowledge a multi-dimensional identity as being self-enhancing but because there are developmental differences in how these women describe and experience this multi-dimensional identity. Women at the Situational stage of self-knowledge tend to describe this phenomena in a matter-of-fact manner with vague, under-developed accounts of the personal benefits of this theme. They

appear to be incapable of describing in a coherent manner how this multi-dimensional identity is self-enhancing. Susan illustrates this cognitive style with the following:

I think that there are good points and there are bad points. I think the good is that I like different things and I couldn't sit at a desk and do the same thing 8 hours a day. I like having the multiple self, that's exciting to me. There is some excitement in juggling all of that, I've come to realize over the years, that I do enjoy that. Too much of it is stressful. So the positives are that somehow, it just feels really good to me, it feels comfortable, I look for it. Even in careers, I like this job because I don't teach the same course every semester, it's different. And at the agency, it was the same thing. I had different families, I was doing home visits, I was doing support groups for families, so there were multiple kinds of things. Its just something that I've identified that's important. So that's the benefit that for me I just enjoy the complexity.

Table 4.8

Self-Enhancing Aspects of Multiple Role Experiences and Stage of Self-Knowledge Development

Multiple Role Theme	Situational 1	Pattern 1	Pattern 2
Self-Enhancing Aspects of Multiple Role Experiences			
Provides Exposure to New Activities &			
Build Support Network	2	5	5
Enhances Self-Competencies	5	4	2
Creates Multi-Dimensional Identity	4	5	3
Builds Self-Esteem	1	4	1
Provides New Learning Opportunities	2	1	1

When Susan was asked to further elaborate on how this complexity affects her core sense of self, she could not describe it's impact on her inner states. Rather she succinctly and matter-of-factly stated, "The multiplicity? It's just part of it. It's just part of who I am." Susan can describe the phenomena of juggling the many life roles, but she appears incapable of describing how it impacts her inner sense of self or what she gains internally from being a multiple role woman.

Women at the Pattern stages of self-knowledge development tend to describe this multi-dimensional identity almost exclusively in terms of the self-enhancing impact on their inner states. They reveal a more developed, coherent, organized description of this theme. Diane illustrates this self-understanding in the following:

I guess I see myself as, because of all of these multiple roles, as very competent. Because I'm doing them all and I feel that I'm, for the most part, successful at them. I think that I have a level or sense of competence and confidence most of the time, that I can do all of these roles and juggle a career and juggle a family and juggle the rest and still have a sense of humor! They all [her different life roles] kind of have that thread of making life worthwhile, of value for me.

#### Self-Restrictive Aspect: Poses Scheduling Challenges

Turning now to the self-restrictive aspects of multiple role experiences, two themes warrant closer examination within this developmental lens. Here it is apparent that women at the Pattern stages of self-knowledge development tended to identify scheduling challenges and a more structured lifestyle as being self-restrictive. This theme was only mentioned by one woman at the Situational stage of self-knowledge development. Two examples of the scheduling constraints that structure the multiple role lifestyle given by women at the Pattern stages include:



It makes it much more monitored and scheduled than it would be otherwise. I tend to be more of an impulsive person and one that just does whatever the whim takes me, but I don't live that way. (Paulette)

Adjusting my schedule at work is a problem at times with the children because they might have lessons or meetings that they are going to. Sports and things like that, you have to work around that. A drawback is being gone on significant nights when they [the family] might have things going on or just be working hard all week and wanting to kick back and spend some family time without the school books, without the other activities and just sit there and be with each other and play games together, but my schedule says that this is the night that you have to go into work. Sometimes that is very disappointing, I know that they are all able to relax and be together and I'm missing out and I'm sad not to be there, but it's just that there is now way around that. I can't go in any other night, the night is here and I'm gone. And so I feel some pangs of sadness because I know what they are doing, they are probably at home having some popcorn and soda and I feel some sadness because I am not there. (Daphne)

#### Self-Restrictive Aspect: Increases Level of Stress

On the other hand, all of the women at the Situational stage of self-knowledge development reported that the increased level of stress was self-restrictive for them. Only three of the women at the Pattern stages of self-knowledge development noted this aspect. For many women, stress went hand-in-hand with multiple role involvement, as evidenced by Susan's words, "I love it [being a multiple role woman], but it's stressful." Other women at the Situational stage of self-knowledge development characterized this increased stress by the following:

I think that you can easily get overextended. And that you can easily get, that if you don't have some sort of way of keeping those things in balance and juggling it... things can seem really crazy and all over the place and out of control. (Sylvia)

It's been more and more worries. Just more worries. I guess I wasn't or if I'm that type of person who can actually handle it. I don't mind helping other people with their problems, but I don't like problems that really have to deal with me. (Stella)

When women at the Pattern stages of self-knowledge development describe the negative impact of stress on their multiple role experience, they tend to acknowledge the internal impact of this stress.

Table 4.9

Self-Restrictive Aspects of Multiple Role Experiences and Stage of Self-Knowledge Development

Multiple Role Theme	Situational 1	Pattern 1	Pattern 2
Self-Restrictive Aspects of Multiple Role Experiences			
Inhibits Socializing / Restrict Personal Choices	3	4	4
Creates More Structure / Pose Scheduling			
Challenges	1	4	4
Increases Level of Stress	5	1	2
Increases Depressive Symptoms	3	4	4

Denise expresses a sense of internal doubt of her own personal competency in managing her multiple roles, particularly with regard to the increased level of stress:

Because at times in your life when there is maybe something extra stressful going on like you don't know where your marriage is standing, or you're about to graduate, and if the two stresses are colliding into each other, then there's this fear involved that you think, 'What if I lose

it all at once?' I have this big fear right now that graduation night or something, I'm going to be, I don't know where I'm gonna, in my head I feel like, 'What if I'm just walking away forgetting something? What if I have a nervous breakdown or lose my memory on graduation night because of all these goals?' I'm afraid that I can't reach them or something.

### Self-Knowledge Development and Role Management

The resources and hindrances of role management are reported next. Table 4.10 summarizes the resources for role management while Table 4.11 reports the hindrances to role management. Looking first at the resources for role management, the data suggest that women at the Situational stage of self-knowledge development are less inclined to report using outside support or organizational tools as aiding them in managing their multiple roles. Seven of the ten women at the Pattern stages of self-knowledge development reported these resources while only one of the women at the Situational stage mentioned these themes.

Susan, the one woman at the Situational stage who mentioned the use of time management tools as aiding her role management, reveals that her “daily organizer” is her guide to determining how she spends her time. When asked what helps her manage her roles, she replies:

Oh, my schedule planner. I live by that thing as a Bible. Everybody's everything is in there. Organization, it really does fall back to organization.

For Susan, the control for managing her roles appears to have been given over to her schedule planner.



Table 4.10

## Resources for Role Management and Stage of Self-Knowledge Development

Multiple Role Theme	Situational 1	Pattern 1	Pattern 2
Resources for Role Management			
Internal Resource: Keeping Things in			
Perspective	4	3	3
External Resource: Using Outside Support			
	1	3	3
Using Time Management / Organizational			
Tools	1	2	2

For women at the Pattern stages, they describe the use of time management tools and the use of outside supports in a different manner. In the interview, Pam describes how better time management, particularly when it comes to scheduling in 'mental health days' or regular vacations, would enhance her role management. Specifically, by scheduling these breaks she would give herself time to "recoup" or rejuvenate herself. When she fails to schedule these "tune-ups," she acknowledges these greatly hinder her capacity to manage her roles effectively. She describes this as:

Not taking time for me, that's it. That's the bottom line. And in any stressful situation, it's not pulling back and allowing myself time to absorb or time for me. It's the pushing, pushing, pushing without giving myself a break.

Women at the Pattern stages of self-knowledge frequently describe the use of time management tools or using outside supports in the context of how they benefit themselves internally.

Table 4.11

Hindrances to Role Management and Stage of Self-Knowledge Development

Multiple Role Theme	Situational 1	Pattern 1	Pattern 2
Hindrances to Role Management			
Lack of Energy	2	4	2
Lack of Perceived Control	3	2	1
Difficulty Getting Started	1	1	4
Lack of Time	5	5	4
Too Many Outside Demands	5	0	1
Lack of Partner Support	3	1	1

Turning now to the hindrances to role management, two clear developmental differences emerge. All of the women at the Situational stage of self-knowledge reported that too many outside demands hindered their capacity to manage their multiple roles successfully. Sherry succinctly states that these outside forces determine how she will function in managing her roles:

I just think that a lot of [how you manage your multiple roles] is determined by the outside, by the external obligations to maintain the house, the car, the college. So all of these demands determine how big each role will take. So it doesn't matter what you might wish it might be, the reality of it is determined by these demands.

Women at the Pattern 2 stage of self-knowledge development were much more inclined to acknowledge that a significant hindrance was an internal difficulty in prioritizing and initiating role management issues. For these women at the Pattern 2 stage, their greatest difficulty was in 'getting started'; they noted their tendency to agonize internally over how to best proceed. Denise illustrates this internal processing in the following:

I would say that right now I'm a little confused about what my priority roles are. I'm having role confusion as you call it. Because, I know that I'm supposed to be a mother and I know I'm supposed to have that first, but then, OK, but it's finals and I've gotta be having the students be first, and then, the marriage has got to be somewhere. I've got to decide something here, I've got to be strong enough to get over them. And so it's like, when people say, 'what are your priorities? If you'd just get that straight, you'd be all right!' I'd say, 'Tell me, I don't know.' Because I'm feeling like I've put them all in the same level or something. So that's where I feel which ones are first because I'm trying to put it all first.

### Self-Knowledge Development and Role Negotiation

The last section covers the developmental manifestations of role negotiation and role conflict. See Table 4.12 for a summary of the different strategies for negotiating role conflict employed by women of different stages of self-knowledge development. There are no clear developmental differences in the types of role negotiation strategies employed by the women in this study, although over half of the women at the



Situational stage of self-knowledge development tended to “do it themselves” when it came to resolving conflict, while only one-fifth of the women at the Pattern stages of development adopted this strategy.

There are some interesting developmental findings when examining how women experience their problem-solving strategies with their partners. The women at the Pattern stages of self-knowledge development can describe their process of negotiation in a coherent, sophisticated manner. These women can articulate either how this process emerged, the contexts which influence successful or unsuccessful conflict negotiation, or the patterns evidenced in their negotiation process.

For each couple, a unique pattern of conflict resolution emerges. For Denise, this conflict negotiation takes place primarily in family therapy. She reports:

Most of our negotiating gets done in family therapy because we have both just rocky paths and the beginning of our marriage was just pure hell. It was like abusive and everything. We’ve only just had in the past four years or so learned how to begin to know to talk to each other in constructive ways. We both began this learning through returning to school... When he decided to come to school with me, his mind became different. He opened up, he got to know himself better and he calmed down a lot. He realized that he didn’t have to do this physical abuse stuff; he’s still working out a lot of the emotional patterns, but at least he’s willing to listen to me to a better degree than he was in the past.

Denise was able to identify how her conflict negotiation patterns emerged. Likewise, Diane described several examples of how she and her partner negotiated areas of conflict and then summarized how she and her husband examined each conflict. They subsequently developed their own process for problem-solving around each conflict.

She reported:

So we had to again, we had to look at [conflict area], what kind of things does that mean for the family? What other kinds of responsibilities does that put on me? So we constantly have to look at the changing roles and the demands that are placed on us because of the roles.

Daphne gives yet another example of the conflict negotiation pattern that has evolved in her relationship with her husband. For this couple, they utilize conflict as a tool for strengthening their communication and building their relationship. She shared:

Well, I think that we allow the conflict to be there and say, 'OK, it's there' instead of saying, 'shame on you, you shouldn't be thinking about such and such.' I just think that that's the way life is, that we have the multiple roles and we're going to be emotional about any of those roles or we're gonna have to be rational about those and work it through. It's there and it's better that we understand that it is going to be there and allow each other to be where they're at. Deal with it if you can help out; then deal with it so that they can then be comfortable with or move one to another role that they might feel like, 'OK, c'mon, let work go and let's be in the husband and wife role.' But you do it in such a way that you say, 'is it possible for you to move on?' and not 'move on because I want you to.'

Finally, other woman characterized her process of negotiating conflict with her partner as being parallel to how they negotiated their marriage. It was a second marriage for both and the negotiation process initiated during their courtship has evolved into their pattern of problem-solving around conflict. Polly outlined their communication patterns in the following:

Once we've discussed it on an intellectual or objective level, then we can talk about the emotional pieces. Because then it is not as loaded. So I think that's how we've dealt with issues is that we objectify them first and then we address our feelings. So early in our relationship... I think it had a lot to do with how we negotiated marriage. Once we knew that we were a real good fit, that we really enjoyed each other's company, that marriage was a possibility, we sat down and we talked about our dreams,

the things we could tolerate, things that we couldn't tolerate, our expectations, our marriage and our relationships. What was it going to mean? For children, what was it going to mean? For us personally? So I guess in essence we had a very effective negotiating discussion before we married.

Women at the Pattern stages of self-knowledge development describe problem-solving strategies as an integrated, coherent process that was crafted by the couple. These women described how they were actively involved in creating a systematic conflict negotiation process with their partners.

To contrast these well-articulated, coherent communication patterns of problem-solving, women at the Situational stage of self-knowledge development described this theme quite differently. For these women, either a less-organized, more trial-and-error type of negotiation process emerges or the negotiation process cannot be articulated. Susan describes her process of negotiating conflict with her partner as being more of a trial-and-error approach:

Our way of working through our role conflicts has evolved through trial and error. So then we'll share this and then we do it and it doesn't work out so then we'll look at it and then, 'well, you're better at this so why don't you handle this and I'll handle that.' I think we go through highs and lows, in our family and in our relationship. There's not really a pattern to the two together or apart. In the marriage, I think we kind of, I like think of a song by Harry Chapin. It's called the Circle Song and it has to do with relationships and people kind of fading in and out and I think that we kind of do that. We're really close for a period of time and then we kind of drift and then we kind of find each other again and we kind of drift back and forth.

While Susan can identify some global patterns in her relationships, she cannot articulate in a coherent fashion their process for negotiating conflict. She describes a more



fatalistic pattern of responding which is more reliant upon the particular phase in their relationship (e.g., high versus low) than any action she or her partner initiates.

When Sherry is asked to describe how she and her partner negotiate role conflict, she responds that they're "able to talk about it more" but she is unable to articulate their process of resolving conflict in any more depth. Likewise, Sylvia acknowledges that she and her partner have "talked about it" with reference to negotiating conflict, but she can't describe this more fully. The following conversation illustrates her understanding of their role negotiation process:

Interviewer: What would happen if there were a conflict? What kinds of role negotiation or renegotiation might be indicated?

Sylvia: Well, we've kind of settled into who does what.

Interviewer: And how did you get to that point?

Sylvia: I don't know. It's been, I don't remember... it hasn't been a real stormy marriage, I don't remember it being any big problems. I mean certainly the time when I stayed at home with our son, we worked it out at the time that it seemed more fair that I did more of the home stuff.

Interviewer: So how do you get to the point of settling in?

Sylvia: We must have talked about it, but I can't recall any conversations about it, but we must have talked about it.

Sylvia, like other women at the situation stage, could only articulate her conflict negotiation process in a simplistic manner, recognizing that she and her partner do problem-solve as a means of resolving conflict but not recognizing an organized, systematic process.

The women in this study applied various approaches toward resolving and negotiating conflict with their partners. When looking at these strategies through the

lens of self-knowledge development, an interesting finding emerges in how these women experience and conceptualize their problem-solving strategies. Clearly the data suggest that women at the Pattern stage of self-knowledge development can elaborate upon their problem-solving in a much more sophisticated manner, frequently yielding a systematic approach. Women at the Situation stage of self-knowledge development cannot articulate the process of problem-solving in a coherent, organized manner.

Table 4.12 summarizes the developmental findings of these conflict negotiation themes.

Table 4.12

#### Negotiating Conflict with Partner and Stage of Self-Knowledge Development

Multiple Role Theme	Situational 1	Pattern 1	Pattern 2
Negotiating Role Conflict With Partner			
Doing It Herself	3	2	0
Problem-Solving and Compromise	3	4	5
Avoid or Ignore Conflict	2	1	2

#### Summary of Developmental Analysis

The socio-cognitive developmental framework, Self-Knowledge Development, explains the variability found among several themes present in the data. The manner in which women conceptualize and define themselves as a multiple role woman clearly

relates to their stage of self-knowledge development. Women at different stages also acknowledge different self-enhancing and self-restrictive aspects of their multiple role experiences. They also report different resources and hindrances to role management and also report a different level of self-understanding in describing similar themes (i.e., increases level of stress). Finally, women at different stages of self-knowledge development conceptualize and articulate their role negotiation strategies with distinct levels of cognitive complexity. Table 4.13 highlights these developmental findings.



Table 4.13

Summary of Developmental Findings

Theme	Situational Stage	Pattern Stage
Internally-derived role definitions	Tend not to make these definitions.	Definitions will incorporate societal expectations, family influences and/or outside modeling into personalized definitions.
Externally-adopted role definitions	Definitions reflect passive acceptance of societal expectations, family influences, and/or outside modeling.	Tend not to make these definitions.
“Should be” language	Includes “should be” , “must be” , and/or “need to be” when referencing personal expectations.	Not present in language.

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Table 4.13, Continued

"Choose to be" language	Tend not to utilize this language.	Includes "choose to be" when referencing personal expectations.
Creates Multi-Dimensional Identity	Matter-of-fact language with vaguely defined or absent explanation of personal benefit; no reference to internal states.	Well-developed, organized, coherent description with strong emphasis on benefits to inner sense of self.
Creates More Structure /		
Poses Scheduling Challenges	Tend not to indicate this drawback.	Describes this drawback in the context of increased decision-making in managing multiple role responsibilities.
Increases Level of Stress	Typically described in context of increased outside demands and lack of personal control.	Tend not to indicate this drawback; when identified, stress is manifested in context of impact on inner states.
External Resource: Using Outside Support	Tend not to indicate this resource.	Mentioned in context of being a tool for role management.

Continued. next page

Table 4.13, Continued

Using Time Management / Organizational Tools	Tend not to indicate this resource.	Mentioned in context of being a tool for role management.
Difficulty Getting Started	Tend not to indicate this hindrance.	Mentioned by Pattern 2 women; difficulty expressed in internal process of prioritizing responsibilities and initiating effort toward role management.
Too Many Outside Demands	Hindrance experienced as increased outside pressure to manage roles; no reference to inner states.	Tend not to indicate this hindrance.
Problem-Solving and Compromise	Unable to clearly articulate process in coherent, sophisticated manner.	Described as integrated, coherent process crafted by couple and tailored to life circumstances.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

This section summarizes and interprets the findings of this research project. After a brief review of the purpose and methods, the author clarifies the main findings, both thematically and developmentally. This is followed by a discussion of the implications of these findings. The meaning of these results are interpreted in the context of the current multiple role literature, with an exploration of how these findings inform and direct this knowledge base. Finally, the discussion turns to the implications upon current practice in working with multiple role women.

#### Summary

As more and more women maintain involvement in the workforce throughout the lifespan, the numbers of women with multiple role responsibilities such as wife, mother and paid worker continue to increase. As was discussed earlier, the impact of these multiple roles upon women's overall well-being is unclear in the current literature.

Some suggest that the more roles that a woman occupies, the greater the likelihood that she will experience the harmful effects of role conflict, stress, depression, and even physical illness (Fowlkes, 1987; Goode, 1960; Hall, 1975; Valdez & Gutek, 1984). The underlying assumption of this body of literature was first coined by Goode (1960) when he put forth this "scarcity" hypothesis. He purports that with each role comes a set level of socially imposed obligations which, when combined,

impairs a person's well-being (i.e., higher levels of depression, distress) due to the finite amount of human energy available to meet these prescribed obligations.

Others suggest that as women's number of roles increases, she has more internal resources to 'buffer' against any potential negatives, regarding the effects of multiple roles to be potentially beneficial (Coleman et al., 1987; Gove & Zeiss, 1987; Marks, 1977; Repetti et al., 1989). This "expansion" hypothesis (Marks, 1977) emphasizes the benefits rather than the costs of multiple role involvement which, in this perspective, encompasses features such as: status, privileges, increased self-esteem, and the ability to trade off undesirable components of roles.

The purpose of this study is to provide a phenomenological approach in order to derive meaning from the apparent discrepancy in the multiple role literature and to expand our understanding of the construct of multiple role quality. This phenomenological study examines how women understand and respond to the complexities of their life role experiences with a more open-ended focus. The aim in this approach is to enrich our understanding of how these multiple role experiences impact women's lives. Borrowing from the field of social cognitive development, this study maintains that people's cognitive capacities affect the way that they make sense of and respond to their life situations. Hence, understanding and identifying the ways that women experience their multiple roles may clarify our understanding of the current empirical multiple role literature.

The research questions guiding this project address four main areas: role definitions, role experiences, role conflict and negotiation, and a developmental exploration of the major themes that emerged within each of the preceding areas.

The first research question focused on role definitions. The author asked questions such as: "How do women describe themselves in the role of wife, mother and paid worker?", "How do they feel about the roles that they play?" and "What does it mean to be a multiple role woman?"

To explore how women experience their different roles, the intent was to understand whether women see their multiple role experiences as enhancing, restrictive, or a combination of the two. The second research question dealt with how women experience their multiple roles. Specifically, what do these women see as self-enhancing? What do they see as self-restrictive?

The third research question centered on how women managed their multiple roles, what facilitated or hindered this process, and how they negotiated role conflict. Role management and role negotiation includes questions such as: "How do women manage their multiple roles?", "What resources facilitate their role management?", "What hinders this process?" and "How do these women negotiate role conflict?"

Finally, the last research question pertained to the developmental analysis of the preceding research questions. In this section, Self-Knowledge Development is utilized as a schema to explain the variability that emerged in these three content areas. Specific attention is directed toward any patterns of response that seem to be related to social cognitive capacity.



## Findings

Turning to the first research question regarding role definitions, the women in this project revealed a range of definitions, from more stereotypical responses to more creative, individualized meanings as they described what it meant to be a wife, mother or paid worker. All women acknowledged the influence of societal expectations upon their different life roles, regardless of whether or not they incorporated these influences into their role definitions. Most of the women derived personalized definitions, acknowledging the various external influences shaping their meanings. The complexity of their definitions ranged from succinct, straightforward definitions to more elaborate responses incorporating developmental transitions, individual differences and circumstantial factors.

A parallel question in this content area focuses on how women make meaning of being a multiple role woman. In examining how women conceptualize this term, some women viewed their multiple roles as being integrated within their self-identity, while others characterized their role experiences as separate from their core self. One woman acknowledged that her self-identity fluctuates in relation to her multiple role experiences. Women adopted personalized definitions, for the most part, with some women referencing the stereotypical “superwoman.”

In exploring women’s feelings about each of their life roles and their multiple role experiences, all of the women acknowledged that they derived pleasure and satisfaction from at least one, if not most, of their role experiences. An overwhelming majority of the women (n = 17) reported that motherhood was one of the most

rewarding aspects of their lives. Almost all of the women also described a great deal of satisfaction stemming from their worker roles. The spousal role tended to elicit more mixed feelings from this sample. The women that reported less favorable feelings about this role also reported that they were currently considering separation from their partners. With reference to being a multiple role woman, women tended to report more favorable feelings. While acknowledging the increased stress of the multiple role experience, these women unanimously voiced that they wouldn't be satisfied without the stimulation of more than two life roles. In fact, most of the women shared that if one of the life roles were absent (e.g., children moved out of the house, retirement), they would fill their lives with another life role (e.g., volunteer, adopt children).

The next set of questions dealt with the multiple role experience. Here women were asked to elaborate on the positive and negative aspects of being a multiple role woman. With regard to the self-enhancing and self-restrictive aspects of the multiple role experience, these women reveal a range of responses. Most frequently cited benefits of the multiple role experience include: an increased exposure to new activities which aids in building a support network ( $n = 13$ ); creates multi-dimensional identity ( $n = 12$ ); enhances self-competencies ( $n = 11$ ); builds self-esteem ( $n = 6$ ); and provides new learning opportunities ( $n = 4$ ). These women noted how they personally benefited from the social interactions gained through their life roles, whether it be in developing new friendships or social supports, gaining intrinsic rewards, or increasing their skills.

On the negative side, women revealed the costs of juggling the multiple demands of their roles. Almost two-thirds of the women revealed that having multiple

roles either kept them from engaging in desired social activities or otherwise restricted their personal lifestyle choices (n=11). Other frequently cited drawbacks include: increases depressive symptoms (n = 10); creates more structure or poses scheduling challenges (n= 8); and increases level of stress (n = 7).

The third research question explores how women manage the demands of the multiple role experience. Women were asked to describe the resources and hindrances to role management as well as how they negotiated around role conflict. The women in this project indicated several resources to role management: keeping things in perspective (n = 11); using outside support (n = 8); and using time management tools (n = 5). Other less frequently cited resources included being flexible with role demands, prioritizing their responsibilities, and keeping their roles separate from one another. These women were quick to mention the various sources of support, both internal and external, which aid them in managing their role responsibilities.

Turning now to the impediments to role management, the women in this study identified numerous factors ranging from personality traits or physiological states to circumstantial factors or demands outside of themselves. The most frequently cited hindrance, mentioned by over three-fourths of the women, was a lack of time (n = 14). Half of the women reported a lack of energy (n = 8) as being detrimental to effectively managing their roles. Other frequently cited responses include: lack of perceived control (n = 6); difficulty getting started (n = 6); too many outside demands (n = 6); and lack of partner support (n = 5). Other less frequently cited hindrances included: feeling guilty, having a negative attitude, worrying about other's opinions of them,



inadequate income, lack of extended family support, and lack of quality baby-sitting or housekeeping services.

In addition to examining the resources and impediments to role management, the women in this study were asked to elaborate upon how they negotiated role conflict with their partners. These women gave several different strategies to handling role conflict. Some women chose to resolve the conflict herself, others negotiated with their partners to problem-solve around the conflict, and a few shared that they tended to avoid conflict altogether. Women frequently employed more than one strategy, depending upon their current life circumstances. Two-thirds of the women acknowledged that they tended to problem-solve with their partners to resolve conflicts between their life roles.

Turning now to the last research question, the major findings of the developmental analysis are revealed. With reference to how women define their role experiences, the data suggests that women make meaning of "multiple role woman" in a variety of personalized definitions. While stage of self-knowledge development did not explain these different conceptual frames, the complexity of their conceptualizations did vary by cognitive stage. It appears that as the stage of self-knowledge increases, the level of cognitive complexity increases with regard to how women describe this construct. As expected, women at the Situational stage tend to characterize the impact of being a multiple role woman upon their sense of self in more simplistic terms, with little or no mention of inner states. Women at the Pattern stages

of self-knowledge development reveal more elaborate definitions, with strong emphasis upon their sense of self.

Women's stage of self-knowledge development also impacts the way in which they conceptualize themselves as multiple role women and the type of language they use in conveying these meanings. Women at the Situational stage are more likely to more passively adopt a definition for multiple role woman from some source outside of themselves. In turn, these women utilize "should be" language which conveys how they are "supposed to" respond according to her externally defined norms. Women at the Pattern stages are more likely to actively create their own unique definition of being a multiple role woman, reflecting that they take responsibility for authoring the meaning of this construct. Their language demonstrates their level of personal agency in that they describe personal choices in the context of this meaning-making, rather than accommodating outside expectations.

Interestingly, parallel developmental differences were not evident in how women conceptualize the roles of wife, mother and paid worker. Most women tend to reveal internally-derived definitions of these roles, created in the context of their own life experiences. However, women at the Pattern stages do tend to reveal more complex definitions with a greater likelihood of incorporating developmental transitions, individual differences, and/or intrinsic personal gains.

For the next research question, the context of women's multiple role experiences is examined within the lens of self-knowledge development. As women describe the benefits and drawbacks of the multiple role experience, interesting

developmental findings emerge. All of the women at the Situational stage mentioned how their multiple role experiences increased their feelings of self-competency while about two-thirds of the women at the Pattern stages acknowledged this benefit.

Women at the Situational stage were also significantly more inclined to note an increased level of stress ( $n = 5$ ) as a drawback. While most women acknowledged that stress was a part of the multiple role experience, women at the Situational stage were more apt to describe it in a negative manner. For women at the Situational stage, this increased stress was experienced similarly to role overload. Role overload refers to the extent to which role demands exceed resources resulting in an inability to accomplish expected work loads. Since these women are more inclined to define their role expectations externally, their increased stress may result from a lack of perceived control to measure up to role expectations. As women achieve higher stages of Self-Knowledge, they have more access to internal resources and a more sophisticated capacity for self-reflection. Hence, women at higher stages of Self-Knowledge would construct role expectations more congruent with internal resources and external demands, subsequently reducing the potential for role overload. Clearly, the relationship between perceived control, role overload, and socio-cognitive development warrants further attention.

All of the women at the Pattern stages acknowledged that their multiple role experiences provided new opportunities to learn and strengthen their support network, while women at the Situational stage were less inclined to reference this asset.



Likewise, women at the Patterns stages were much more apt to describe drawbacks such as scheduling challenges or a structured lifestyle (n = 10).

Developmental stage illuminates an interesting finding in how women describe these aspects. Using the theme “creates a multi-dimensional identity” as an example, cognitive differences emerge in how women conceptualize and describe their benefits. Women at the Situational stage tend to describe this theme in a cognitively simplistic manner with vague, under-developed accounts of the personal benefits of this theme. Women at the Pattern stage reveal a more developed, coherent, organized characterization with strong emphasis upon the internal rewards of this multi-dimensional self. When looking at how women describe and experience the increased stress brought on by the multiple role experience, women at the Situational stage tend to report stress as being “pulled in different directions,” “being overextended,” or some similar manifestation of feeling compelled to meet numerous outside demands. Those women at the Pattern stages who identified increased stress as a drawback tended to experience stress more internally, with reference to how stress causes them to doubt their self-competencies and raises feelings of inadequacy.

It appears that women at the Situational stage are “situationally-embedded” in regard to how they experience their multiple roles. In essence, these women can’t see the forest for the trees. Each role demand or situation is viewed singularly and the resulting stress from each situation potentially has a cumulative effect. Whereas, women at the Pattern and higher stages of Self-Knowledge development view the “forest” of their multiple role lifestyle by reflecting on patterns of experiences and

contexts. The capacity to have a more global perspective on the multiple role experience may compress the negative impact of role overload and increased stress.

The last section summarizes key developmental findings with regard to role management and negotiating role conflict. The resources and hindrances to role management, as well as differing experiences of negotiating role conflict, reveal interesting developmental findings. All women, regardless of stage of self-knowledge development, were inclined to mention keeping things in perspective as an internal resource. However, women at the Pattern stages were more likely to report using outside supports and time management tools to facilitate their role management.

One might expect women at the Situational stage to be more inclined to utilize outside supports in managing their role experiences. However, perhaps the “situational-embeddedness” of women at this stage prevents them from acknowledging the utility of outside resources across their role experiences. Keep in mind that these women were not asked if they specifically used outside resources. They were simply asked to describe what helps and/or hinders their ability to manage their multiple roles. Since women at the Situational stage will view each context specifically, they would be unlikely to spontaneously identify tools that would facilitate their role management on a global level, as women at the Pattern and higher stages would.

Likewise, almost all women, regardless of developmental stage, reported a lack of time as being a significant hindrance to role management. Developmental differences were found in several types of hindrances with women at the Situational stage significantly more likely to report too many outside demands and women at the

Pattern 2 stage significantly more likely to report a difficulty getting started. Again, the relationship between perceived control and socio-cognitive development warrants closer attention. It appears that women at the Situational stage experience a lack of perceived control in an external, concrete manner while women at the Pattern 2 stage experience this lack of control in an internalized fashion. Women at the Situational stage report the increased role demands as usurping their control in meeting these external expectations while women at the Pattern 2 stage express difficulty in prioritizing or deciding how to proceed in managing their life responsibilities. Perceived control and decision-making latitude has been identified as a mediator in the mental health outcomes of multiple role women (Piechowski, 1992); the results of this study suggest that how women experience this perceived control and decision-making latitude varies by socio-cognitive developmental stage. While women at the Situational stage tended to report a lack of personal control and inadequate partner support with a greater frequency than women at the Pattern stages, the greater frequency of having a difficulty getting started could be the internalized manifestation of a lack of personal control.

With reference to negotiating role conflict, a trend emerged with women at the Situational stage slightly more likely to report resolving conflict on her own than women at the Pattern stages. However, the manner in which women describe and experience problem-solving and compromise reveals interesting developmental findings. Women at the Situation stage of self-knowledge development have difficulty articulating their problem-solving process in a coherent, organized manner while



women at the Pattern stage reveal an elaborate, systematic approach to problem-solving and compromise.

### Contributions to the Literature

There are two main contributions to the existing multiple role literature. The first concerns a possible explanation for the discrepancy in the role occupancy literature and the second concerns a deeper understanding of the construct of multiple role quality. There are two contradictory hypotheses in the role occupancy literature regarding the impact of multiple roles. One body of literature, supported by the "scarcity" hypothesis, suggests that as the number of roles increase, there are more harmful outcomes (Fowlkes, 1987; Goode, 1960; Hall, 1975; Valdez & Gutek, 1984). The premise behind the "scarcity" hypothesis is that each role brings with it a set of socially prescribed expectations which, when combined, negatively impacts a person's well-being. Goode's (1960) theory proposes that due to the cumulative effect of these imposed obligations, a person experiences role conflict or role strain resulting in higher levels of depression and/or distress. Another body of research supports the "expansion" hypothesis which maintains that as the number of roles increase, there are more positive benefits (Coleman et al., 1987; Gove & Zeiss, 1987; Marks, 1977; Repetti et al., 1989). Marks (1977) first put forth this theory which emphasized the benefits rather than the costs of multiple role involvement. In this perspective, the increased social status, increased privileges, higher self-esteem, and the ability to trade off undesirable components of roles provided ample opportunities to compensate for any detrimental aspects of the multiple role experience.

The results of this study support both hypotheses, providing an alternative framework which appears to mediate the apparent contradiction of these opposing viewpoints. In support of the “scarcity” hypothesis, Fowlkes (1987) maintained that multiple role involvement led to either incompatible or excessive role expectations which resulted in physical or mental exhaustion. This study clearly supports this premise as fatigue, emotional burnout, and lack of energy were identified as negative outcomes of the multiple role experience. Moreover, women at the Situational stage of self-knowledge development were more inclined to have excessive or incompatible role expectations as they tended to passively adopt external, socially prescribed definitions of the multiple role experience. These women were also more likely to engage in “should” language, which cognitively sets themselves up for the mental exhaustion stemming from these socially prescribed role expectations.

In support of the ‘scarcity hypothesis,’ depression or increased distress results from the role overload or role conflict associated with increased role involvement (Hall, 1975). While increased depression and higher stress levels were reported as negative outcomes by the women in this study, those at the Situational stage of Self-Knowledge development were more inclined to report increased distress resulting from multiple role involvement.

Turning to the opposing viewpoint, research in support of the “expansion” hypothesis discounted the impact of role conflict with regard to role occupancy (Crosby, 1987; Greenhaus et al., 1987; Pleck, 1985). Research supporting this premise suggested that as role occupancy increased, so did positive outcomes such as reported

levels of happiness (Gove & Zeiss, 1987) or overall well-being (Coleman et al., 1987). The data from this study supports the "expansion" hypothesis literature in that the interviews revealed ample evidence of the positive impact of the multiple role experience. All of the women, regardless of developmental stage of self-knowledge, identified self-enhancing aspects of their multiple role experiences. In fact, these positive aspects occurred with greater frequency than the negative, self-restrictive aspects. However, women at the Pattern stage of self-knowledge development demonstrated more personal agency in their self-talk and reflected a greater propensity for utilizing tools to manage role conflict, suggesting that higher developmental stage could be an internal resource for overcoming the negative impact purported by the "scarcity" hypothesis.

Current strategies for mediating these differences of these two hypotheses point to the perceived quality of multiple role experiences. With regard to the impact on women's mental and physical health outcomes, several studies cited the mediating influence of perceived multiple role quality (Baruch & Barnett, 1987; Gove & Zeiss, 1987; Repetti, 1987; Repetti, 1988; Steil & Turetsky, 1987). Repetti (1988) found that married working women who perceived a more equitable distribution of household responsibilities were less likely to experience depression than women who did not experience this spousal support. This data supports the premise that the perceived quality of the multiple role experience is related to whether the perceived outcomes will be more positive or negative. In addition, this project suggests that participants self-knowledge capacity will influence how they experience, understand, and describe the



quality of their role experiences. It appears that as the stage of self-knowledge development increases, the quality of role experiences is described with greater personal agency, more breadth and depth, and more insight into the relationship between inner states and outside experiences. Likewise, higher self-knowledge stage is associated with a greater utilization of tools for managing role conflict, a lower frequency of reported distress, and a more sophisticated, systematic approach to negotiating conflict with their partners.

This study suggests that a social cognitive developmental framework, Self-Knowledge Development, is a useful template for understanding the discrepancies within the multiple role literature. Stated simply, the stage of self-knowledge development may mediate the influence of the multiple role experience upon overall psychological well-being. People at the Situational stages of self knowledge development would express less personal agency around how they conceptualize their role experiences. Moreover, they are more inclined to measure the overall quality of their role experiences against socially prescribed, externalized standards which could result in increased role overload or role conflict due to unrealistic expectations. Likewise, people at the Pattern stages of self knowledge development would be associated with more personal agency and a more sophisticated, coherent, organization of the interaction between their inner states and their external social interactions.

With reference the construct of multiple role quality, these findings provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. In some studies, the construct of multiple role quality is defined as “marital and familial satisfaction” (Steil & Turetsky, 1987) or

“family role quality” (Barnett, 1990) or “overall happiness” (Gove & Zeiss, 1987) frequently relying upon “expert consultation” to design their measurement tools. However, a pioneering study (Baruch & Barnett, 1986) with reference to the construct of multiple role quality examined women’s multiple role involvement and the quality of their experiences in relation to psychological well-being. Their role quality measure was based upon interviews of 72 women to identify rewarding and distressing aspects of each role they occupied. The data from this study supports their construct of multiple role quality as many of the self-enhancing and self-restrictive aspects of the multiple role experience mirror their findings. Thus, this study supports Baruch and Barnett’s (1986) measure of multiple role quality and adds to the literature which broadens our understanding of multiple role quality to be more than “happiness,” “family satisfaction,” or “marital satisfaction.” It suggests that higher multiple role quality is experienced when women report greater self-competencies, higher self-esteem, more versatility with regard to multi-dimensional strengths, a greater support network and new learning opportunities which are attributed to their multiple role experiences. Lower multiple role quality is evident when women emphasize inhibiting personal choices, increased depressive symptoms and distress, and a more structured lifestyle when describing their multiple role experiences.

This study expands the current understanding of multiple role quality as the developmental analysis suggests that the quality of women’s multiple role experiences will be experienced differently by women at different stages of self-knowledge development. For example, women at the Situational 2 stage of self-knowledge

development experience increased stress levels more externally (i.e., being pulled in all directions and lack of personal control at managing the outside demands placed on them). While women at the Pattern 2 stage of self-knowledge development experience increased stress with more internal manifestations (i.e., feelings of inadequacy and decreased self-competence when feeling overwhelmed by multiple role responsibilities).

In summary, social cognitive development appears to mediate the influence of the multiple role experience upon psychological well-being such that women at the Situational stage of Self-Knowledge development appear to be more likely to fall prey to the adverse effects of role strain and role conflict due to their lack of personal agency. This lack of personal agency coupled with their tendency to ascribe unrealistic expectations over their role responsibilities could contribute to increased distress and depression, as the “scarcity” hypothesis purports. Moreover, women at the Pattern stage of Self-Knowledge development tend to be more likely to gain benefits from their multiple role experiences as they understand and can apply an internal sense of organization linking their interactions with their social environment. Hence, these women are more inclined to generalize the positive gains from their multiple role experiences as the “expansion” hypothesis suggests.

In addition to the potential mediating influence of Self-Knowledge stage, this study expands our understanding of the construct of multiple role quality. In addition to corroborating Baruch and Barnett’s (1986) measure of multiple role quality, social cognitive development suggests an alternative means for understanding how women perceive and experience the quality of their multiple roles.



### Implications for Further Research

The career development of women has only received concentrated attention by researchers within the last forty years. Historically speaking, initial research examining the career development of women focused on understanding why women work, rather than investigating the kinds of vocational choices women made or the career patterns women experienced over time (Gysbers, Johnston & Gust, 1968; Hoyt & Kennedy, 1958). Another group of researchers moved away from the why question and placed emphasis on the how. How did women make vocational choices? These scholars explored the nature of women's career development (Eyde, 1962; Richardson, 1974). Moving beyond an exploration of women's career orientation, a later group of theorists identified various career patterns that women displayed within the context of their career development (Super, 1957; Zytowski, 1969). The unifying theme of this body of career pattern literature was an attempt at categorizing women's career development along lifestyle patterns, without focusing attention on the factors that may have influenced the emergence of these patterns. A simultaneous trend in literature examining women's career development was to develop frameworks based upon the influence of these varying influences (e.g., sex role orientation, occupational stereotypes and discrimination, socioeconomic status, race, exposure to role models, family background characteristics, educational level, academic ability, intelligence). Several theorists grouped these variables into larger categories, for ease and clarity of understanding their impact on women's career development (Farmer, 1976; Matthews & Tiedeman, 1964). Later researchers developed comprehensive models of women's

career development (Farmer, 1985; Fassinger, 1985). Other models reflected the application of psychological theories upon women's career development, including a developmental approach (Gottfredson, 1981; a social cognitive self-efficacy approach (Hackett & Betz, 1981) and a social cognitive expectancy-valence approach (Brooks & Betz, 1990).

In sum, the research on the career development of women initially focused upon one question, "why do women work?," to later broaden to address the complex interacting influences unique to women's career and lifestyle experiences. Models incorporated cultural, environmental or situational, biological or background, and psychological influences. Current trends suggest that researchers are beginning to recognize and wrestle with the complexities of career development, for both men and women, acknowledging that men and women experience career and lifestyle decisions differently due to the varying influences on their development (Eagle, Miles & Icenogle, 1997). While these differences frequently surround lifestyle decisions around marriage, family and career, a deeper understanding of how people negotiate decisions around these life roles would enhance the current career development literature.

The results of this study suggest that applying a social cognitive lens to the process of career and lifestyle decision-making warrants further investigation. This study reveals that socio-cognitive capacity sheds insight into how women negotiate role conflict and manage their multiple roles. As Self-Knowledge stage increases, women are more able to embrace the complexities of their multiple role involvement, indicating a parallel application in career and lifestyle decision-making. Further research is

necessary to understand how social cognitive capacity relates to this process. Self-Knowledge Development Theory reveals an important component to understand the relationship between cognitive development and career/lifestyle development as it emphasizes the relationship between self-understanding and one's social environment.

Turning now to the multiple role literature, this study suggests additional areas for further study. To continue our understanding of the discrepancy in the role occupancy literature, future research could replicate this study with women at varying stages of self-knowledge development and varying numbers of life roles. This study suggests developmental differences in how women experience their multiple roles, but does not necessarily hold true for non-working mothers, working women without children, or other combinations of fewer life roles. The author purports that varying the number of roles will result in similar findings, suggesting that both the "scarcity" hypothesis and "expansion" hypothesis are true, depending upon women's stage of self-knowledge development. In addition, more research is needed with women at a broader range of self-knowledge stages in order to more fully understand the relationship between self-knowledge capacity and experienced outcomes of multiple roles.

Finally, it must be remembered that the women in this project were all White, middle-class, and between the ages of 35 and 50. As "middle class" includes a wide range of income levels, it is important to remember that the median annual income for this sample is between \$40,000 and \$60,000. Hence the lower middle-class status of these women may prevent them from regularly buying resources (e.g., housekeeping



services, lawn work, child care and/or babysitting services) which could facilitate their role management and subsequently influence how they make meaning of the outcomes of their multiple role lifestyle. Future research needs to determine whether these results can be used to understand how women in other racial, social-class and age groups make meaning of their multiple roles. In addition, the perceived necessity to work was not controlled, with women in this sample reflecting a range of reasons for working. Future research needs to explore the differences, if any, of women's perceptions when working out of economic necessity versus personal choice.

### Implications for Practice

The findings of this project inform future interventions for the growing numbers of multiple role women in both form and content. Employee assistance programs, mentoring programs, family support services, higher education support services and all the professionals who work therein could benefit from these findings.

In creating effective interventions to support women in managing their multiple roles, it is important that these interventions are sensitive to the role management issues raised by these women. Clearly, interventions need to be sensitive to the limited time available to these women. Flexibility, ease of access, and even child care support could make these support services more responsive to the needs of these women. Self-guided curricula, multi-media resources and possibly even internet tools could be creatively incorporated into service delivery mechanisms. One woman in this project who was also completing a masters degree mentioned how audiotaping lectures and

listening to them while driving allowed her to manage her multiple demands more effectively.

Mentoring programs and support groups have been widely used in higher education and social service agencies to aid women in managing their multiple roles. Kegan (1994) suggests people become frustrated or “in over our head” as there is a mismatch between our cognitive capacity and the complex mental demands of the curriculum of modern life. This study sheds insight into how these services can be tailored to the social cognitive capacity of the participants. Consulting psychologists and EAP counselors in organizational settings as well as counselors, psychologists and social workers in group settings could utilize the ERT2 diagnostically to assess the socio-cognitive development of their respective audience. These professionals could then tailor their presentation or intervention so as to stimulate further self-knowledge development while more accurately and effectively meeting the needs of their audience. For example, if all of the members of an audience are at Pattern or Transformational stages of Self-Knowledge, the consulting psychologist could save valuable time and more effectively join with his or her audience by focusing on patterns of interactions and their relationship to behavioral outcomes. It is important to note that this tool is to be used diagnostically and should never be revealed to organizations in a manner that would breach confidentiality.

In another example, stage of Self-Knowledge development can be utilized to select appropriate role models for group discussions. By asking “Patty,” a woman at the Pattern stage (or higher) to share how she manages her multiple roles, she will

likely reveal more personal agency in sharing her experiences. Likewise, as “Sally,” a woman at the Situational stage, shares her concerns, a group counselor could ask a woman at the Pattern stage to help identify any patterns in Sally’s experiences, thus aiding Sally in the process of organizing her own patterns of interactions.

In addition, a group counselor would not want to further stress group participants by asking them to engage in activities or discussions that are beyond their self-knowledge capacity. Using the previous group scenario as an example, it would be inappropriate to put Sally on the spot and ask her directly to identify patterns in her behavior across her different role experiences (e.g., “Are there any parallels between how you manage the household and how you work on the job?”), as this question exceeds her socio-cognitive capacity. However, by eliciting the support of other group members (at higher stages of Self-Knowledge development) and then asking Sally to determine the accuracy of other’s comments, she may begin to further develop her social cognitive capacity.

As participants discuss their role management strategies, women at the Transformational Self-Knowledge stage can be used as models to reveal how they change personality patterns to remedy problematic issues. As the group counselor attends to the meaning making of Tracy’s, a woman at the Transformational stage, role conflict, the facilitator can ask Tracy to first elaborate on the dysfunctional pattern of behavior. Then, Tracy can be asked to describe her own “self-talk” as she changed this internal pattern. In this way, she can model the process of developing self-interventions to remedy role conflict.



Thus, by assessing the socio-cognitive capacity of participants within support groups, mentoring programs, or other interventions, the professional has access to new tools for ensuring that there is a “best fit” between the mental demands of the intervention and the participants. By tailoring interventions to stimulate further socio-cognitive development, multiple role women will be more inclined to develop internalized tools (e.g., self-talk) for negotiating role conflict and successfully managing their multiple roles. Hence, this study suggests that it would be beneficial to have women of differing stages of self-knowledge development paired or grouped together, in order to stimulate their socio-cognitive capacity. Again, it is important to note that in using the ERT2 diagnostically, care should be given to preserve the confidentiality of individual’s stage of self-knowledge development.

### Conclusion

With growing numbers of women in the workforce and increasing numbers of working mothers, there are more and more women managing multiple roles. The current multiple role literature reveals both the positive and negative outcomes of this phenomena, suggesting that the perceived quality of these role experiences mediates these outcomes.

An underlying assumption of the multiple role literature is characterized by two opposing philosophies with regard to role occupancy. The “scarcity” hypothesis maintains that as the number of roles increase, more negative outcomes such as increased role strain, role overload, and role conflict result. An opposing view, the “expansion” hypothesis, emphasize the privileges rather than the obligations that accrue

when the number of roles increases. These scholars argue that rewards such as self-esteem, recognition, prestige, and financial gains more than offset the costs of adding on roles. The underlying assumption is that only one of these hypotheses is true. This study suggests that both can be true, depending upon women's stage of self-knowledge development. How women conceptualize and understand their role experiences on a socio-cognitive level relates to how they experience their outcomes.

While this study focuses exclusively on the multiple role experiences of White, middle-class women approaching mid-life, the author suggests that similar patterns of self-knowledge understanding will be revealed among women across more diverse role experiences. Moreover, by seeking to understand women's experiences from a phenomenological perspective, an appreciation of how women negotiate the complexities of their multiple roles is gained.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Working Mother,

You are invited to participate in a research project supervised by the University of Massachusetts at Amherst concerning factors related to the well-being of working mothers. My name is Michelle Stefanisko. I am a doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology at the University of Massachusetts and am a working mother myself. My research project involves interviewing working mothers in order to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and rewards their different life roles (wife, mother, worker, etc.) bring to their lives. I am interested in collecting information which could be helpful to other mothers who may currently be experiencing emotional or physical problems due too many role responsibilities with too little support.

Participation involves an interview (about 1 hour long) and a short questionnaire. All information, communicated orally or in writing, will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not appear in any papers or articles. I will be using a tape recorder to record the interview. If you'd like, I would be glad to share the results of the study with you when it is finished.

As a participant, you will be paid \$10.00 for your expertise and for the work entailed in being interviewed. I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in this important research. If you have any questions about any aspect of this project, please feel free to contact me at (413) 467-7597 or Dr. Brunilda DeLeon, Professor in the Counseling Psychology Program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst at (413) 545-6904. If you would prefer to write to me, the address is 226 Middlesex House, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,

Michelle Stefanisko



APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Please complete the following:

1. Please check the item below that best describes the highest level of formal education you have completed.

☐ some high school (number of years )  
☐ high school diploma  
☐ some college (number of years )  
☐ associate's degree (two year degree) or certificate program  
☐ bachelor's degree (four year degree)  
☐ graduate school (number of years )

2. On the average, how many hours per week do you work for wages outside of the home?

Please list your job(s) title(s) and the number of years at each job.

---

3. How many years have you worked full-time (over 35 hrs/wk)?   
How many years have you worked part-time (under 35 hrs/wk)?

4. How many years have you been married?

5. What is your date of birth?  What is your spouse's date of birth?

6. How many children do you have under the age of 18 who currently live in your household?  Over 18?  Total # children in household?

Please list the age of each of the children in your household included in the previous question.

---

7. What is the total combined yearly income of your household before taxes?

☐ under \$20,000  
☐ \$20,000 to \$39,999  
☐ \$40,000 to \$59,999  
☐ \$60,000 to \$79,999  
☐ \$80,000 or more

8. Would you be willing to participate in a 1 hour interview about how people describe and understand their multiple role experiences? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please give me your name, telephone number and the best time to reach you to schedule an interview. (All interview participants will be paid \$10.00 for their time.) Thank you for your willingness to participate!

Name:

Phone:

Best times to call:

## APPENDIX C

### PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this study conducted by Michelle Stefanisko, a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts, for the purposes of dissertation research. I understand that the research involves the study of how women describe and understand their multiple role experiences. I have willingly volunteered to participate in this project without coercion of any kind. I have agreed to participate in an interview lasting approximately 1 hour, which is part of the study.

I understand that there is minimal psychological risk involved in this work. I understand that I am free to refuse to discuss any matters which cause me discomfort or that I believe are an invasion of privacy. I understand that I can stop the interview at any point and withdraw from the study at any time.

I understand that confidentiality will be strictly maintained, that information that I convey will not be shared with anyone, including members of my family. Due to the nature of this project, there is a slight risk of being identified. The researcher has explained the steps to protect my identity thoroughly. I understand that the interview will be tape recorded and that the tapes will be erased after being transferred into written form. All identifying information will be deleted from the transcripts and they will be seen only by the researcher, her Dissertation committee, and colleagues who will serve as consultants. I have the opportunity to select my own pseudonym and make suggestions for altering any identifiable information for my transcript. I am free to participate or cease participating in this project without prejudice from the researcher.

Results of the study will be made available to me at my request.

I understand that I will be paid \$10.00 for my participation.

Michelle Stefanisko has answered all of my questions about the study and I am willing to participate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX D

### PRE-INTERVIEW INTRODUCTION

(To be shared verbally with participant)

Interviewing for clinical research is very different from talking with someone in therapy. When my clients share about their personal concerns, I know them fairly well, know what issues may be difficult to discuss, and can often tell how they're feeling. This personal history that I share with my clients helps me to be more sensitive as I ask questions. However, I don't know you very well. I may not be able to tell if you're confused, or having a hard time with the topic, or just need a break. So it's very important for you to be in charge of this process. Please tell me if there are questions that you do not want to answer, if you're having difficulty talking about something, or if you need a break for any reason. You are my teacher in regard to this topic. I'm also learning about interviewing people in a way that's respectful and comfortable. So I'll appreciate any information you give me about how this is working for you.

I want you to know that your name will not be repeated to anyone in regard to this interview. Your answers to questions are confidential.

There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions in this interview. They are all about your personal experience. I am very interested in learning about the different life roles that you have. I want to understand your experiences. Some of the questions may not make sense to you. If you don't know what I mean by a particular question, please ask me to explain it further.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

LIFE ROLES

What are the different roles [such as wife, mother, daughter, worker, etc.] that you currently play? Try to identify at least five roles. Of these roles, if you had to choose the top three roles that are your current priority (or you currently expend the most energy toward), what would they be?

*Then, for each of the three roles identified, ask the following questions.*

Describe what it means to be a \_\_\_\_\_.

What is an ideal \_\_\_\_\_?

In reality, what kind of a \_\_\_\_\_ are you? Describe yourself as a \_\_\_\_\_.

Who are the significant people you relate to in your role as a \_\_\_\_\_?  
How would they describe you as a \_\_\_\_\_?

What do you get out of being a \_\_\_\_\_? How does it benefit you?

What are the drawbacks of being a \_\_\_\_\_? How does it hurt you? (What are the costs?)

How does being a \_\_\_\_\_ affect your lifestyle?

How will the absence of this role affect your lifestyle?

In general, how do you feel about being a \_\_\_\_\_? Why?

*Since you've identified many roles that you are currently experiencing in your life, one could say that you are a 'multiple role woman.'*

How does being a multiple role woman affect your sense of self?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a multiple role woman?  
Benefits? Costs?

In general, how do you feel about being a multiple role woman? Why?

## ROLE MANAGEMENT

Are you devoting sufficient time and energy to your priority roles? Which would you like to devote more time and energy to?

What would make it easier to manage all of your role responsibilities?

What factors make managing all of your role responsibilities more difficult?

## PARTNER'S ROLES

How would your partner define his or her roles?

Would his or her perceptions agree with your perceptions of your roles and role priorities? Would your perceptions agree with his?

How would your role pattern perceptions fit together? What would be the sources of conflict?

What kinds of role negotiation or role renegotiation might be indicated?

How can awareness of role options and role priorities help you achieve an equitable life pattern or equal partnership?

## CONCLUSION

Is there anything else about being a multiple role woman that you would want to convey to your own daughters or to another woman?



## APPENDIX F

### THE EXPERIENCE RECALL

Identifier: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_\_

We are trying to find out more about how people make sense of their personal experiences. The following instructions and questions are part of an extended process for improving an instrument that elicits samples of the ways in which a person reflects on past experience. Feedback from the many people who have responded to this approach consider it a valuable educational exercise... one that can provide additional understanding about something important that has occurred in their past. Anything written remains confidential and anonymous. We ask that you provide an identifier for us in the following form: birth date in the following form (mm-dd-yy) followed by the first initial of your last name e.g., 06-22-78a ('a' for Adams).

Please write the identifier in the space provided above.

\*\*\*\*\*

- A. I would like your to think back to some earlier times in your life and recall some specific experiences or incidents where you were in conflict because of the different life roles that you were in. These experiences might have been uncomfortable and difficult, but they were very important to you. In the space below, jot two to four brief indicators for those different experiences.
  
- B. Now, pick one of those times to remember in greater detail.
  
- C. Once you've selected the experience, respond as best you can to the following questions.

1. Describe as fully as you can the experience you remembered. Please try to include:

- \* what you did and what others did
- \* what you were thinking and feeling in the situation
- \* what specific conditions or events made you respond as you did
- \* what led up to this experience
- \* what were some of the consequences of the experience

2. How was that experience important to you then?
3. How is that experience important to you now?
4. From the experience you are remembering, please describe some things you know about yourself now.
5. In what ways were your thoughts, feelings and actions in your recalled experience typical of thoughts, feelings and actions you have had in other situations? Is there a 'pattern' to your responses in these kinds of situations? If so, how would you describe or characterize the pattern?
6. What do you find satisfying or dissatisfying about the ways you think, feel and act in such situations?



7. Describe anything you have tried to do to modify your thoughts or feelings in order to change your way of responding in these situations. Please try to describe how your efforts affects or has affected your typical response.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Do you have any ideas about ways you MIGHT try to modify any of your thoughts or feelings in order to change your way of responding?

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you for responding. We hope this reflective activity has been useful to you. If it has, for your own information, you might wish to take some of the other incidents you have listed through this same sequence of questions.

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