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WORK/FAMILY ROLE INTEGRATION:

A STUDY OF SINGLE WORKING MOTHERS

OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

By

C. WAYNE HARDER

A thesis presented to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Social Work

Faculty of Social Work
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
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A Study of Single Working Mothers of Preschool Children

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A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University

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Abstract

The following is a Master of Social Work thesis that examines how single working mothers of pre-school children balance work/family roles. Seven women volunteered to participate in a single semi-structured interview. A qualitative research method, in particular the mode of analysis for grounded theory, was chosen in order to explore how participants used a variety of strategies to integrate roles.

The literature review discusses how social policy and the traditional distinction between work and family roles have contributed to an emphasis on the private responsibility for caring. The eco-systemic perspective is utilized as a theoretical framework in order to describe how individual interaction with the environment is aimed toward problem solving and achieving mastery.

The use of analytic tools from grounded theory allows the researcher to relay the experiences of participants as a process of organizing and delegating care giving and of acquiring support as a worker and as a parent. Using the same tools, this experience is integrated into a discussion on individual functioning, progressive social policies and supportive workplace policies and benefits.

The thesis concludes with recommendations for structural change in both the workplace and in government policies. Employers can acknowledge the interrelationship between work/ family roles by implementing formalized policies in such areas as scheduling and family related leave. Government policies can support the role of care giving by facilitating more affordable and flexible child care options. Support for this role can also be achieved by enhancing income transfers such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) and by reducing pressure on single working mothers to accept low income jobs.

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Chapter I
Introduction

i)Rationale

This thesis consists of a qualitative study which examines the needs of the working single parent of children under the age of six years old (preschool). The intent of the study is twofold. First, what are the needs of these parents and what are the resources they require in order to parent adequately? Secondly, how can the workplace be modified or changed in order to support the parenting role? The eco-systemic perspective is used as a theoretical guide while a modified grounded theory approach forms the basis of the research design.

The decision to choose single working parents as a thesis topic occurred after the researcher became aware of government policy initiatives aimed toward addressing the problem of single parents and unemployment. In 1996, the government of Manitoba implemented a program called Taking Charge in order to assist many of the 13,000 single parents who rely on social assistance. The existence of such an initiative underlines the importance of aiding the single parent population (Winnipeg Free Press, 1995, 1999). The fact that close to 50% of all single parents require some level of social assistance underscores the need for such programs (Statistics Canada, 1992).

The review of the literature exposed the researcher to the manner in which work/ family conflict can affect both single and married parents. In their review of the literature on work/family issues, Menaghan and Parcel (1990) surmised that the employment experiences of parents can be expected to affect their well being, the interaction patterns in their families and the development of

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their children. As the researcher, I learned that while all working parents experience significant demands around work and family life, single parents appear to be especially affected. Lero and Brockman (1993) found that single parents must cope with greater physical demands on their time and energy. "They face serious challenges managing work and family responsibilities and coordinating the practical demands associated with multiple roles" (p104). Single parents were found to experience more tension on a daily basis as a result of juggling work, family, and child care responsibilities. On factors related to work schedule, child care arrangements and the logistics of balancing work and family life, single mothers reported on a scale of 1-10, a 4.8 level of tension compared to 4.2 for married mothers. Mitchelson (1985) found that employed single parents worried more about the time they spend with children than their married counterparts.

The 1988 National Child Care Study (NCCS) is an excellent source of data on families across Canada. The study was a collaborative project involving academics across Canada as well as Statistics Canada. The sample consisted of 24,155 families. The survey aimed at gathering information on not only parent child care needs, use patterns, and preferences but also on their work involvement and family characteristics (Lero and Brockman, 1993).

The NCCS illuminates the disparities between single mothers and their single father counterparts. It supports the premise that single mothers face more economic and vocational constraints than opportunities. In 1987, the income for single fathers was almost $13,000 a year more than for single mothers. Eighty one percent of single fathers were employed compared to 52% of single mothers. Single mothers were more likely to be parenting small children and less likely to be enrolled in an educational institution (Lero & Brockman, 1993).

Lero & Brockman (1993) say that the NCCS demonstrates that the care of young children

(0-5 years old) influences whether a parent is employed or enrolled as a serious student in an educational institution. They say the economic health of a family depends on the ability of a parent to earn sufficient income or to continue or complete her education. Single mothers are frustrated in their attempts to accomplish these activities by the need to manage time and resources and to arrange funding child care.

Studies like the NCCS provide statistically valid data on the reality of single mothers but limited in their capacity to explain how their lives unfold. In a quantitative study of single employed mothers by Goldberg et als. (1990) an attempt was made to correlate employment variables such as work absorption and number of hours worked with family variables such as social support. Such studies aid our understanding of the importance placed on certain factors in the work and family domains. However, they are limited in their capacity to shed light on the complex relationship between these domains.

In the quest for a suitable research design in which to study single working parents, the researcher became more familiar with the area of qualitative research. A qualitative research approach provides the flexibility to allow parents to identify their needs as parents in some depth. Rather than narrowing the scope of the study to a number of set variables and then attempting to draw a relationship between them, a qualitative design permits us to identify issues and to elaborate on them.

The need to construct a study that permits elaboration on both family and work life became more clear to the researcher as he examined the literature. Such elaboration is necessary in order to address the complex interdependence between the work and family domains. Traditionally, work and family have been viewed as two separate worlds. The historic

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geographical separation has evolved to include conceptual and psychological boundaries between work and family life (Piotrkowski, 1979) (Duxbury et al, 1991). Although there is a complex interdependence, viewing them separately has obscured this relationship. Piotrkowski (1979) noted that parents were more likely to report family related stress than work related stress because the latter is considered a natural part of that environment.

This study looks beyond the traditional distinction between work and family life and toward an alternative view that draws connections between them. Piotrkowski (1979) says this relationship can be positive, neutral or in opposition. In order to uncover these connections, a qualitative methodology is used to explore how the working role affects family life. Such an approach provides the flexibility to determine what is important to parents and what is necessary to support the parenting role. The connection between work and family life will not become apparent unless we examine parenting needs in depth and are able to relate them to the working role. For example, a parent may not consider an understanding and supportive supervisor as important to them until they have had the opportunity to explore how work affects their care giving.

A qualitative study can allow us to understand how work can both enhance and detract from family life. Echenrode and Gore (1990) say distress caused by working conditions can result in fatigue, depression, anxiety and distraction. It can affect a parent's emotional and physical availability to her children. At the same time, work can complement the parenting role through a process of enrichment (Katy, 1990). Work provides not only a social outlet to parents but can also provide economic well being, structure, identity and status. A qualitative approach has the capacity to uncover the paradoxical relationship between working and parenting by giving the

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respondent the opportunity to identify how work can positively and negatively affect family life.

The use of a qualitative design is helpful when examining concepts that are difficult to measure according to the rules of quantitative methodologies. How a parent defines the interpersonal relationship with her child is individual. The use of quantitative measures such as Likert scales are limited in helping us understand these relationships. When exploring the emotional life of families, for instance, the researcher was interested in knowing about the interpersonal relationships between parents and their children and how the family achieves identity and intimacy (Piotrkowski, 1979).

The mothers in the study achieved an identity and intimacy in a number of ways. Each sees herself as someone who has to ensure that other care givers are meeting her child's need for safety and stimulation. She also sees herself as someone who must adapt according to conditions and who must somehow manage between two often incompatible roles. The mother gauges intimacy by the amount of quality time she is able to spend with her child. She also views intimacy in terms of her innate understanding of her child as an individual.

The researcher's interest in workplace policies and benefits developed as he read about efforts to implement such policies in workplaces in Canada and United States. While there is more recognition of the need to support parents in the workplace now, questions remain regarding the nature of such support and the extent to which employers should go to provide it. A number of authors attribute the hesitancy of companies to implement family responsive policies to the traditional organizational culture that promotes the separation of work and family (Auerbach, 1990; Covin & Brush, 1993; Paris, 1990). This viewpoint is held not only by employers but by employees as well.

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While employers can support their employees as parents in a number of ways, many initiatives have fallen short in reaching their objective to meet certain needs of employed parents. The research questions in this study are designed to not only identify these needs but also to explore how parents believe they can be met. This is accomplished by asking how supportive their employers are currently and how they envision them being more supportive. The final question explores how beneficial parents find certain workplace policies and benefits.

The study explores the nature of the instrumental and psychological tasks of the parenting role. The mothers reported how they managed the instrumental aspect of care giving such as household management. Managing was accomplished by prioritizing and by handling finances and time effectively. Another instrumental aspect of care entails providing adequate supervision of children as well as physical care. The mothers managed this task by delegating care to those people they determined to be competent. They also negotiated and demanded time from employers in order to provide instrumental care. The psychological task of care giving requires that mothers be emotionally available and responsive to their children's developmental needs.

Asking mothers to identify the instrumental and psychological tasks of parenting allows us to place the parenting role in the proper context for the discussion of workplace policies and benefits. Paris (1990) says the majority of workers do not consider their employers as having a responsibility to provide family responsive workplace policies and benefits. According to Covin & Brush (1983) there is a corporate culture in North America that cultivates such attitudes. The questions in this study are intended to flow from the perspective of the parent's needs and how the parents see these needs being met. The parent will be able to respond to the question about the existence of certain policies and benefits in the context of whether it is what they require in

order to perform parenting tasks.

The researcher attempted, in the analysis, to examine not only the tasks and needs of mothers but also the role of mothering. This involves examining the manner in which caring shapes women's opportunities and has significant consequences for them (Baines et al, 1998). The role of caring has traditionally been considered a private responsibility and has been undervalued in terms of its importance in supporting and preparing productive members of society (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1992; Ferguson, 1998).

The undervaluing of caring is reflected in both the workplace and in society in general. Single working mothers experience personal and economic consequences in fulfilling the caring role (Baines et al, 1992). The role often requires them to accept low paying positions and to forgo training and education in order to combine both care giving and employment. Those who attempt to maintain higher paid employment often must cope with unsupportive workplaces (Aldous, 1990).

The majority of single working mothers live near the poverty line (Duxbury et al, 1991). This is can be attributed in large part to inadequate income transfers. Low to modest income working families (families with an income of less than $40,000 per year) saw almost no increase in actual income from 1984-1996 while families earning from $40,000-$60,000 saw an increase of almost $2000.00. The regressive taxation system and the lack of cost of living increases can be blamed for this disparity. Low to modest income working families can expect an increase under the new Child Tax Benefit but this will occur at the expense of families on social assistance (Canadian Council on Social Development,CCSD,1997). These same families are also subject to a daycare subsidy system that penalizes those whose income exceeds $25,000 (Lochead & Shalla,

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1996).

All seven of the mothers interviewed in this study fell into the low to modest income range. Four of the mothers earned less than $25,000 a year. They all experienced significant hardship in managing work and family responsibilities. The Taking Charge initiative was designed to assist mothers in securing and maintaining employment by helping them integrate these responsibilities. The purpose was to coordinate existing childcare and training resources with employment opportunities (Winnipeg Free Press, 1994). Without more funding for child care and with fewer middle income jobs available, a program like Taking Charge serves mostly to keep working mothers in low income jobs.

i)Contributions of this Research

The intended outcome of answering the research questions are findings that reflect the work and family reality of a group of single working parents. These findings will contribute to the literature on workplace policies and benefits through their consideration of family and work interdependent. It does not follow that because there are usually geographical boundaries between home and work, there need be psychological and conceptual boundaries. The findings also go beyond the normative acceptance of current workplace and parenting realities, toward consideration of the potential of workplaces to support parents. This potential encompasses changes in attitude toward both the relationship between work and family and the implementation of policies and benefits adaptable enough to accommodate the wide variety of parental needs and priorities.

The findings in this study will be useful to employers who see a need to implement more family responsive workplace policies and benefits. There is more recognition today than in the

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past of the value these kinds of policies have in aiding the maximization of profits (Wartwick & Cochran, 1985). Addressing the family needs of workers can serve to stabilize the workplace by reducing absenteeism and turnover (Fernandez, 1986). It can be seen as a cost- effective way to increase competitiveness (Paris, 1990).

Employers who are struggling to find ways to implement policies and benefits will benefit in a study that not only identifies the requirements of parents but also searches for innovative ways to make the workplace supportive. In order to determine whether a given policy or benefit will meet parenting needs, it is important to determine what these needs are. For instance, a Winnipeg company introduced an onsite daycare before determining the childcare needs of their employees (Fenton-Smedts, 1996). Other employers have realized that offering a package of different benefits and allowing employees to choose from them " cafeteria style", is a way to provide for the wide variety of parental needs and priorities (Fernandez, 1986).

ii) Research Questions

During the data collection phase the researcher was interested in knowing what single working parents needed in order to effectively fulfill the parenting role. What did they see as the psychological and instrumental tasks of parenting? How did they accomplish these tasks and still perform the role of worker? Finally, what kind of supports and resources did they require as parents?

The researcher wanted to explore the manner in which these parents viewed workplace policies and benefits. To what extent did they exist in their workplace? Were they helpful? What could be changed or implemented in order to make the workplace more supportive to them as parents?

Finally, the researcher wanted to identify several typical workplace policies and benefits and explore whether these parents considered them to be desirable. The researcher described such benefits as childcare support, family related leave, flexible working hours and alternate work arrangements. Benefits were also defined as intangible employer supports such as empathy, understanding and non-discrimination.

The data collection process resulted in seven working mothers coming forward to share their experiences. They talked about their children and their workplaces and how they balanced these responsibilities. When developing the research questions, the researcher did not seek feedback from members of the target population regarding the format. This resulted in the data unfolding in a manner not anticipated.

The first research question attempted to uncover what these mothers required in order to parent effectively. This involved asking for a description of the tasks of parenting and the resources needed to accomplish these tasks. The researcher expected to hear responses about needs and resources that he would be able to neatly categorize. Instead he heard descriptions of needs and resources that were woven into a story about managing work and care giving.

The mothers responded by describing their children and their responsibilities. They talked about the many hardships of being a mother who is employed. In terms of needed resources, these mothers described having limited time, physical and emotional energy, and finances. They answered the question by talking about the mothering role and how they overcame limited resources by using various strategies.

The second question regarding the workplace yielded unexpected responses as well. The researcher expected the mothers to be able to analyse work by imagining hypothetical situations.

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Once again the mothers described their workplaces as they did their care giving, and gave an account of the nature of their role. They relayed positive things about work and also how work demands could compromise their capacity to care give. The mothers responded to the often incompatible demands of work and care giving by again utilizing a variety of strategies.

The mothers preferred to talk about the meaning work has for them and their families. Questions about their preference for certain workplace policies and benefits did not generate a great deal of discussion. The mothers were quite entrenched in their realities. Some mentioned how nice it would be to have a certain benefit or shorter work hours. Overall, they were quite pragmatic about the potential of their workplaces to support them as parents.

The manner in which the mothers responded to questions about work were unexpected but very insightful. It revealed the complexities in the relationship between work and family life. For instance, the researcher's focus on preferences for workplace policies and benefits shifted to the way in which mothers make vocational choices and adapt to the workplace. Many established themselves vocationally by considering how it affected their role as a parent. Factors such as job security and status were regarded by one mother as just as important as flexible working hours and sick child care leave.

The thesis is organized around a chapter on the findings and a chapter on the integration of the findings and the literature. The following literature review identifies the eco-systemic perspective as the major theoretical framework for the study. The thesis also attempts to support the assumptions of the researcher with a review of the literature. The methodology chapter discusses in-depth the qualitative research design as well as the process used in carrying out the research. The findings chapter is divided into three main categories: managing emotional well

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being, managing care giving and managing work. Each category is prefaced and concluded with sections on properties and intervening conditions. The integration chapter attempts to synthesize the findings with the literature by using the same format as the findings section. The discussion chapter examines developments in the policy arena, reviews other studies and makes recommendations.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The following chapter begins with the major theoretical orientation of this study. Eco-systemic theory emphasizes the interconnection between the individual and the environment. The subsection on the individual dimension uses the eco-systemic perspective to describe the role of the individual functioning within the context of the environment. The subsection on the structural dimension focuses on the researcher's interpretation of the forces acting upon the individual. These forces include the social policy context as well as the normative expectations around mothering.

i) Eco-Systemic Perspective

The eco-systemic perspective (Eco-systems) provides a theoretical basis for a discussion of work/family issues. Drawing theory from the available literature is an important part of the development of theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity, which is a grounded theory construct, refers to the capacity to give meaning to the data by separating the important from the unimportant. A theory can be used to stimulate theoretical sensitivity by providing concepts and relationships that can be checked against the actual data (Strauss & Corban, 1990).

Meyers (1988) says the underlying position of the eco-systemic perspective is that the person is connected to other people as well as the social institutions, cultural forces and physical space that make up his or her environment. The perspective draws upon general systems theory and ecological theory. The emphasis is on the connectedness of the person to, and his or her relationship, with the environment.

Eco-systemic theory was devised to act as a unifying perspective for social work practice.

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It is not a model with prescriptions on how to handle individual problems and does not subscribe to a particular theory of personality. The perspective is primarily a model of assessment and therefore, can encompass any treatment model (Meyers, 1988). In the case of the following study, the model serves as a framework for understanding the relationship between the care giving and work roles.

Compton and Galaway (1989) say the eco-systemic perspective and the concept of role help us understand how the principles of systems theory can be applied to real life situations. Ecological systems theory provides a conceptual framework that shifts the focus away from cause and effect relationships about the environment and person. Rather than trying to determine whether the environment affects the person or vice versa, it views the person/situation as an interrelated whole in which each element is both cause and effect. An understanding of the dynamic interactions, transactions and organizational patterns, which are essential to the functioning of both the individual and the situation, is achieved when we study the whole system.

Eco- systems theory strives to attain a full understanding of the complex interactions between the parent and all levels of social systems and the meaning the parent assigns to these interactions. In order to understand the exchange between work and family systems, it is important to examine the transactions, matches, opportunities and limitations of these systems (Compton & Galaway, 1989) (Piotrkowski, 1979).

In order to understand how the work role can affect family life, we have chosen to view the family as a social system. According to Piotrkowski (1979) "this approach implies that a family cannot be understood merely as a collection of individuals. Rather, it is a social group, continuous in time, composed of interdependent roles and people who interact according to

implicit rules of psychological and social interaction" (p4). In terms of work and the family, Piotrkowski (1979) describes how the emotional subsystem of the family interfaces with the subsystems of household work and external work.

At the point of these interfaces are the psychological and structural dimensions. The psychological dimension consists of both the positive and negative carryover of work. It also encompasses personal depletion and energy deficits. The structural dimension on the other hand, addresses the matter of time and space. The structural and psychological dimensions are not mutually exclusive but are in fact quite interdependent. The distinction is necessary because most work occurs outside the home and, therefore, time and space create obstacles for families who are attempting to achieve a desired closeness (Piotrkowski, 1979).

Understanding work and family life in terms of psychological and structural factors allows us to focus on the four processes of time, space, energy and psychological interference. Small and Riley (1990) say these processes can interfere with the various family roles. They identify the role contexts of the parent-child relationship, work relationships, peer networks, marital relationship, leisure interests and home management.

The processes of the psychological and structural dimensions can be described using the concept of role. According to Compton & Galaway, the concept of role is not only useful in describing the interaction within the system, but also serves as a transacting or bridging concept between the individual and the larger social system to which they are linked. The literature on work/family issues contains numerous references to role interference and role overload (Pleck, 1980) (Menaghan & Parcels, 1990). The relationship between the parent and the psychological and structural dimensions of work and family can be understood by using these concepts. In this

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literature review, role overload and role interference will be referred to as work/family conflict or inter-role conflict.

The concept of role overload suggests that the activities of multiple roles are too numerous and incompatible to allow for the role to be carried out adequately or comfortably. Small and Riley (1990) talk about the amount of time spent at work and away from home and the amount of energy required to fulfill the work role. Role overload suggests that there are consequences for the occupant who must balance the demands of multiple roles. Duxbury et al (1992) say individuals report having too many to tasks to handle comfortably. They will often feel physically and emotionally drained. They are likely to frequent feel rushed in accomplishing necessary tasks. Overloaded individuals will also believe they do not have enough time for themselves. Pleck et al (1978) also talk about the mismatch between a parent's work schedule and routine family events. For example, a mismatch occurs when the parent has to miss an event that is important to the child.

Role interference relates to how an individual perceives the work role as conflicting with the family role. First, this can occur through psychological absorption where the parent becomes mentally preoccupied with work concerns while away from work. Second, the physical and psychological challenges of work can fatigue the individual, which leads to less available energy for non-work activities. Pleck et al (1978) refer to interference as work spillover and say it involves physical or psychological consequences such as exhaustion, irritability or psychological preoccupation. Interference can result in an employee viewing work as a hindrance to effective parenting. It can also produce the attitude that family responsibilities negatively effect work performance (Duxbury et al, 1992).

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Duxbury et al(1992) identify a number of attitudes expressed by parents who believe the work role interferes with the family role. Parents express a longing to do more activities with their children. They resent the amount of time their job keeps them away from their family. The preoccupation with work is seen as affecting family life. Finally, parents will view work as decreasing their energy level and altering their mood to the extent they cannot fully participate in or enjoy family life.

The context of individual problem solving can be understood by using the eco-systemic perspective. The researcher focuses on how the innate adaptation and coping abilities of human beings allow them to combat overwhelming environmental stressors (Abrams, 1983). The eco-systemic perspective aids our understanding of the adaptation process by providing a structure for envisioning the complex transactions between individuals and their environments. An important premise of this perspective is that people cannot be fully understood except in relationship to their environment (Meyer, 1988).

When one focuses on the individual in the problem solving process, it is possible to determine how reclaimed competence and increased integration can positively affect interpersonal relations and role transactions. Furthermore, such a focus makes it possible to understand how a reciprocal relationship exists between the person and society. It also allows us to understand role requirements and expectations within a particular role system (Abrams, 1983).

The responsibility of parenting requires that the individual fulfill certain role requirements and expectations. The parent must function as both a breadwinner and care giver. The parent also forms part of a system comprised of the mother-child dyad surrounded by external systems. Since the focus of the study is on both care giving and working roles, single working mothers as

problem solving individuals and as family systems.

Abram's (1983) model of problem solving proves helpful in understanding the context of individual responses to the environment. Although his approach was designed for use in individual casework practice, it can also serve as a framework for understanding the individual and structural aspects of a problem. The essential elements of the model differentiate the person from the problem, the place and the process. The model assumes that people are exposed at certain times to powerful stimuli and therefore have to undergo modifications in behavior and affect. It corresponds with eco-systemic perspective by viewing the person as recognizable to herself and others only in the context of a specific set of psychological-social frameworks that function within the boundaries of a given set of life circumstances and in transaction with given forces. While the model views the as a complete biopsychosocial system, it perceives only part of her as engaged in a problem solving event.

The following is an adaptation of Abram's problem solving model. The person or the family identifies a problem as a situation that is present and uncomfortable. The problem can assume the form of a person to person relationship or a person to task relationship. Traditional casework focuses on the individual's need to develop skills or acquire resources. Mullaly (1993) says problem identification from a structural standpoint focuses on how policies and norms influence individual problems.

The place can be viewed as any person, organization or other entity that engages the individual in the problem solving process. Abrams (1983) examined how social agencies help adaptation by focusing on individual change. From a structural perspective, the place can be viewed as requiring engagement on behalf of the individual. This study concentrates on the role

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government and organizations play in facilitating adaptation.

Process is the continuous and dynamic context in which problem solving takes place. It allows us to identify the parents' need for structural and personal resources. According to Abrams(1983), the process phase requires a clear identification of the problem along with the expression and clarification of the emotions associated with it. After succeeding in determining the nature of the problem, the next task is to clarify the options available to solve it.

This study views process as involving more than an individual's capacity to problem solve. Normative expectations around mothering play a role in adaption as does the manner in which caring is undervalued (Baines et al, 1998). That is, individuals, mostly women, are socialized into assuming an inordinate amount of responsibility for caring without adequate compensation. This results in demands on time, energy and economic resources that cannot be ameliorated without structural changes.

Ego psychology is a theory that addresses the innate human drive to master life experience. Although this theory focuses on individual psyche and, therefore, does not conform to the principles of eco-systems, it is useful in explaining individual motivation and reactions to the environment. Ego psychology is based on the assumption that humans are born with an autonomous, conflict free ego that functions without unconscious conflict. The ego encompasses human perception, apprehension, cognition, anticipatory memory, impulse control, judgement and selection. The essential goal of the ego is to cope with problematic decisions (Perlman, 1977).

Perlman (1977) says problem solving is fundamental to human activity and that all living beings are engaged in an ongoing struggle to adapt more effectively. He says " the person, through the use of ego functions in daily conscious and unconscious decisions, imitates life in

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doing or problem solving" (p42).

It is natural for people to extend themselves in the drive for effectiveness or mastery. All possess an unconstrained problem solving capacity which is found in the conflict free area of the ego. The ego consists of functions such as perception, judgement, cognition, memory and choice. People are motivated by the expansion of the self and are restricted by negative life experiences, inadequate stimulation, lack of opportunity and self destructiveness (Perlman, 1977Abrams, 1983).

The key to successful adaptation is to be able to understand the problem and to be actively engaged in solving it. People, either individually or collectively, can alter their own behaviors if their interpretation of the problem is valued and they possess a clear idea of what to do. This occurs by transacting with the environment and by continuously establishing the self within the transactional field. Therefore, the problem solving outcome is a product of the interaction between the parent and her specific reality. She defines herself through transactions with social realities and the performance of tasks (Abrams, 1983).

Adaptation occurs as a result of an imbalance within a system. If we consider the parent as part of a system and as interacting with other systems, problem solving capacity is enhanced when she possesses boundaries that are sufficiently permeable to allow for exchange with the environment. The nature of this exchange affects the balance of the variables within a given system. The presence of too little stimulation can result in entropy while too much stimulation can overextend the resources of the system. An equilibrium is achieved by learning to take in and give out energy and by learning to change within acceptable limits. The ideal is for the system to be able to regenerate itself and move on to a higher level of functioning (Meyer, 1988).

Eco-systemic theory considers the effect of the individual's adaptation on other parts of the environment. For instance, a parents attitude and behavior can have implications for other family members. Similarly, parents attempt to safeguard the family from being overwhelmed by influences, information, energy and experiences that cannot be assimilated into their way of living (Meyer, 1988).

The inability to adapt occurs because problem solving capacities or resources are maladaptive. It is a sign that the person needs material or psychological help for the problem. The failure to cope with a problem can be attributed to a lack of motivation, capacity or opportunity to solve the problem in appropriate ways. The inability to adapt is not caused by a weak ego, psycho pathology, intra psychic conflict or failure in the functioning of the individual, but as a deficit in problem solving means (Abrams, 1983).

Abram's (1983) eco-systemic problem solving model focuses on individual interaction with the environment. The researcher found this perspective useful when analyzing the responses of mothers to questions about their working and parenting. Although this perspective accounts for factors in the environment, there is a tendency to view adaptation in terms of the individual capacity to overcome obstacles. The influence of the environment is part of the equation but can be overlooked in terms of adaptation. The researcher defines problem solving as encompassing the the environment's capacity for change as well. This is important when examining how changes in structural conditions can influence individual adaptation.

Knowing the nature of individual functioning allows us to understand how people relate to their environment. The researcher has adopted Abrams (1983) interpretation of the eco-systemic perspective by focussing on the intricate relationship between the problem, the person and the

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structural context (process) in which problem solving takes place. The person is regarded as a social being who is orientated toward adapting to circumstances.

i) Individual dimension

Human beings are actively engaged in coping with problems and with mastering their environment (Meyer, 1983). Perceptions and attitudes can shape the way people interpret their needs and view demands. Perception is a complex event involving at least four steps: reception, registration, processing, and feedback (Reid and Sigurdson, 1990). Attitudes on the other hand, are socially constructed ways of thinking (Collins, 1994). Individual attitudes are prone to change and are open to interpretation by others (Henerson et al., 1987).

A discussion of individual perceptions and attitudes is a departure from our eco-systemic focus on the individual and the environment. An examination of perception and attitudes allows us to understand how problem formulation affects role transactions. It is important, therefore, to focus on how a parent identifies a problem and subsequently adopts a strategy to address it.

A discussion of the cognitive domain compliments our discussion on the eco-systems perspective by exploring how people adapt. Systems theory addresses the nature of adaptation between systems. It allows us to determine the extent to which psychological and material resources are needed in order for adaption to occur. Cognitive theory on the other hand, allows us to explore individual psychological resources and limitations in depth. Wright (1988) says using cognitive theory in relation to problem solving permits us to see how identifying, examining, testing and correcting cognitions and schemas can shed light on current emotional, behavioural, and coping difficulties.

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Wright (1988) describes how the cognitive triad encompasses three cognitive patterns regarding the parents' view of themselves, their world, and their future. First, a negative view of self can lead to thoughts of inadequacy and a lack of confidence in one's ability to achieve success and happiness.

A negative view of the environment results in thoughts of one's inability to overcome obstacles that stand in the way of goal achievement. Such people see the environment as making unrealistic demands upon them and see themselves as lacking sufficient problem solving skills. Finally, they believe that the current state will be unremitting and will continue into the future.

Problems can be understood by developing insight into individual cognition. The individual monitors automatic thoughts and images for the presence of negative feelings. The presence of such feelings is a cue that the individual needs to closely examine his/her thought processes. The next stage is to draw a connection between those thoughts and feelings (Burns, 1980; Wright, 1988).

Drawing a connection involves testing cognition for accuracy. This requires a search for evidence of these thoughts and images being true. The individual attempts to determine if there is another way to look at the problem. If the thoughts are true, what are the realistic consequences of the problem and what are the disadvantages of having to repeat those negative thoughts? Finally, an attempt is made to determine the kind of task that can be undertaken to address the problem (Wright, 1988).

The task of overcoming an obstacle or stressor is often referred to as coping. Coping is similar to problem solving in that both represent the act of responding to environmental stimuli. The act of coping not only alludes to the response to stimuli but also to the impact of the stimuli,

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in particular the emotional impact, on the individual. Stanton et al. (1992) use a scale to identify ten ways in which coping can occur. The most basic way is to practice confrontational coping by adopting an attitude of " standing ground and fighting" the stressor. Another method is to deny there is a stressor by distancing from it and going on as if nothing happened. The maintenance of self control is the third way and it entails trying to contain the emotional impact of the stressor by not expressing feeling. The fourth way is to escape and avoid the stressful event and hope that a miracle will resolve it. Seeking social support by talking to someone about feelings is an effective way to cope. Accepting responsibility for the manner in which the stressor is affecting the person is an initial step toward resolution. Practicing planned problem solving by making a plan of action and following it is the next step. Finally, the act of positive reappraisal allows the individual to reappraise the effect of the stressor once she has successfully dealt with it.

Ellis (1983) says negative emotions are not caused by particular demands but by the way we feel about the demand. He devised the ABC Game as a method to assess perceptions. The "A" refers to the activating event such as the demand for housecleaning. "B" alludes to beliefs, both rational and irrational. A rational belief is that the parent's mother cleaned the house every Friday and an irrational belief is that when the parent does not do the same, she is an irresponsible, negligent homemaker. The "C" stands for consequences and can denote feelings of guilt and sadness.

The vast majority of lone parent households are headed by women who subsequently experience opportunities, costs and consequences in this role. The experience is both positive and negative. It is positive in that it presents opportunities for mothers to have meaningful relationships and personal autonomy (Baines et al, 1991; Mitchelson, 1985). That is, the act of

parenting can be a source of fulfilment while the opportunity to manage a household without a partner can be a source of independence. Mitchelson (1985) also found single working mothers can develop an enhanced self image by being able to master multiple demands.

According to Murdock (1983), single working mothers experience psycho-emotional consequences when fulfilling the role. They can experience an inordinate amount of loneliness, guilt, anger and dependency. Murdock's (1983) assumptions are based on a traditional view of a family as being comprised of two parents who can provide each other with emotional support as well as share the care of the children. The focus on psycho-emotional well being also places an emphasis on individual adaptation rather than on structural change (Mulally, 1993). The focus on individual solutions to problems can also be attributed to the trend toward self help during the 1980s and the 1990s. This trend has spawned many books and workshops on what individuals can do themselves to overcome problems.

The practice of self care is considered an important strategy for individual adaptation. A healthy body can lead to a healthy mind. A holistic approach to health maintenance requires a recognition of the interaction between mind and body and an awareness of how emotional stress can take a physical toll on the body. Stress can be inflamed by lifestyle habits such as smoking and overeating and can be counterbalanced by exercise, sleep and healthy eating (Smith, 1979).

The problem of loneliness can be addressed through acceptance and planning. Feelings of loneliness are natural unless they dominate an individual's life. Persistent and chronic loneliness can lead to emotional deterioration and physical deterioration. Callahan (1979) recommends that single mothers should set flexible and realistic goals around organizing social contact and maintaining emotional support.

According to Murdock (1983), single mothers are susceptible to developing age inappropriate parent-child dependency. This dependency is characterized by an excessive need between the child and parent for each other. Such a need can inhibit individual functioning at an age appropriate level and can deter the normal growth of the child away from parental dependence and toward the development of an individual social life and identity. Murdock (1983) asumes that mothers need to learn that it is not necessary to share all of their child's emotional burdens.

Anger is an emotion experienced by all people and can be difficult to deal with because we are generally discouraged from expressing it. Therefore, the appropriate expression of anger is considered liberating and therapeutic. People generally feel badly when they are angry and are socialized to believe that anger alienates and offends others. Anger can be interpreted as a normal feeling and a normal reaction to a stimulus. A common reaction to anger is to suppress it. There is a tendency to deny feeling angry and to substitute it with more acceptable feelings like sadness or hurtfulness. Depression is sometimes defined as anger turn inward (Dlugokinski, 1977).

The feeling of guilt is another common emotion experienced by single parents. Many believe in the normative standard of the two parent household (Lero and Brockman, 1992).The failure to achieve such a standard can, therefore, be viewed as detrimental to the child. The feeling of guilt often occurs around time limitations and financial constraints. Guilt can be offset by accepting the reality of single parenthood and by not believing in the stereotype that children are adversely affected by single parenting (Norris & Miller, 1979).

Time limitations can be viewed as structural and perceptual. This section is more focused on the perceptual and on how the parent determines her capacity to manage with limited time.

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The parent manages time more effectively by identifying the most important tasks of living such as those involving health, child supervision, self care, food and shelter. Her perception of time limitations can be lessened by learning to simplify tasks around areas such as shopping and laundry, by buying in bulk and wearing easy to maintain clothing (Osher, 1979).

Parents who must rely on alternate care in order to work often feel guilt and sadness around not being able to spend more time with their children (Menaghan & Parcel, 1990). This is particularly the case for parents of children under the age of three years old. However, many no longer see organized child care as a necessary evil, but as an important part of the working parent role. The perception of day care is more positive when it is viewed as part of the family support system. Many parents see it as a supplement and not a substitute for parental care (Belsky, 1987).

A focus on the psychological-emotional state of single working mothers does not account for the imbalance between the importance of caring and societies devaluation of it (Baines et al, 1992; Mulally, 1993). Mullaly says the process of consciousness raising can lessen the impact a problem has on individuals by making them aware of the problem's structural dimensions. While this is an improvement over an individual focus, it still does not address the lack of shared responsibility and the distribution of resources for caring.

ii) Interpersonal Dimension

A supportive network is a universal need regardless of parenting status. The demands of care giving and the isolation that can result from single parenting, however, result in some parents having a greater reliance on a supportive network. Caplan (1996) defines social support as an enduring pattern of continuous or intermittent ties that play a significant part in maintaining the psychological and physical integrity of the individual over time. Such support may be of a"

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continuous nature or intermittent and short, and may be utilized from time to time by the individual in the event of an acute need or crisis" (Hobfoll and Stokes, 1988, p.498).

A supportive network has been viewed as central to the psychological well being of people. Being embedded in a social network and having the social resources necessary to respond to stressful events has been shown to have a direct impact upon individual stress and a buffering effect on individual well-being (Tracy and Whittaker, 1990).

The network supports and guides the single mother in making the role shift toward assuming primary daily responsibility for being an authoritative leader with her child. She needs help in sorting out a reasonable consistent style of home discipline that maintains a workable family equilibrium. The single mother looks to her network for this guidance (Brassard, 1982,).

Social support strengthens individual functioning in three ways and can be differentiated from a social network. First, it provides information that leads an individual to believe that she is cared for and loved and is a valued member of a network of mutual obligation. A support network sends a message, through emotional expressions of empathy and encouragement, that the person is understood and is competent in a role. Second, a network can provide instrumental aid in the form of concrete help that reduces the number of household and childcare tasks. Finally, it can offer informational support regarding child care or parenting. (Cochran, 1993).

A individual's social network can be defined more broadly than social support. A social network is depicted as a specific set of linkages among defined persons. Social support is defined more narrowly and is generally seen in a positive manner and consisting of information around work and parenting, emotional support and material assistance. A social network, however, can be both positive and negative. For instance, it can be costly, lead to rejection and betrayal or

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foster dependence (Cochran, 1993).

Social support exposes the parent to a number of important social processes. All living beings require feedback in order to establish an identity. Support provides a parent with a sense of being able to master her environment and of being a loved and esteemed member of a social network. It also assimilates the parent into the mutual, reciprocal, give and take world of intimate sharing relations (Stoesz, 1996).

Social support facilitates coping with stressful situations. Stoesz (1996) describes how stressful situations follow a sequence and how various kinds of support come into play. The crisis stage is followed by a greater need for emotional support. Following the crisis stage, there is a transition period that creates a reliance on cognitive support. After the transition, there is a deficit period which necessitates the need for material support.

The above example illustrates how the same basic problem may evoke different supports as it moves through various stages and transformations. Jacobson (1986) says that the anticipation of a stressful event may require different kinds of support. As well, the timing of social support is critical. A parent with a very sick child may view help with household duties and childcare as initially more important than emotional support.

The effectiveness and availability of social support will depend on its fit with the particular needs of the individual (Hobfoll and Stokes, 1988). Single working parents, in particular, can have more involved life schedules. They often have little time to nurture outside relationships because the daytime is spent at work while the evenings are spent with the children. The cost of childcare and a limited budget can also restrict social opportunities. Physical and emotional fatigue are other factors that can affect social contact (Murdock, 1983).

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Crochenberg (1988) states that there are four benefits derived from social support. First, it can reduce the sheer number of stressful events-childcare, child rearing advice, financial assistance-that might otherwise accumulate. Second, support acts as a buffer in that it prevents the parent from becoming emotionally overwhelmed by a stressful event Third, supportive people help parents develop coping strategies. Self confidence can be bolstered by a more experienced member whose suggestions can help improve skills. Positive feedback in the form of relevant information can enhance a willingness to take positive initiatives and can therefore, help the parent overcome the self doubt that is caused by inexperience. Fourth, ongoing emotional support and nurturance can affirm the mother's sense of self as a person deserving of care and capable of caring for someone else. This can promote an inclination to nurture others (Crochenberg, 1982).

The nature of the relationship between social support and parental well being is difficult to assess. The benefits of social support are dependent partly on the attributes of the problem and the individual's orientation to using the resources of her network (Stoesz, 1996). The presence and availability of a social network does not necessarily mean it will be supportive. Cochran (1993) found that network size, proximity of membership or frequency of contact were not associated with emotional well being. Instead, she found improved mother-child interaction occurred when mothers had a network of people who provided child care assistance and emotional support..

Researchers have studied the link between gender and social support. Hobfoll (1986) noted that women not only develop biologically differently than men, they are also socialized differently. As a result, they possess distinctive psychological traits. Part of this distinction is that women care more about what occurs to those around them, and are more comfortable about seeking help and caring for others. They develop intimate social networks in which social support

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takes place and as a result, become more interpersonally and socially skilled. While men are more group oriented, women focus more on intimate, close dyadic ties (Hobfoll and Stokes, 1988).

Studies have shown that differences exist in the degree to which women and men perceive and utilize support. Women report spending more time than men exchanging emotional support which is defined as a sharing of feelings and personal concern with others. Women also report more contact with family such as visits, phone calls and letters (Hobfoll and Stokes, 1988). Females were said to have larger social networks than men and reported greater perceived and actual support and greater satisfaction with their supports than men. Perceived social support is defined as the belief that, if the need arose, at least one person in the individual's circle of family, friends and associates would be available (Hobfoll, 1986).

Women tend to experience different role demands than men in the family, workplace, and society in general. Hobfoll (1986) identified two stressors that have confronted women. One is rapid change and the other is the addition of new roles. The world for women has changed markedly in the past 20 to 30 years and, subsequently, women are now working in almost every field at every level of expertise and authority. Women have entered a world away from home, a world that has traditionally been dominated by men. Changes have also occurred inside the home with the advent of the dual role of housewife and worker.

iii) Structural Dimension

The following discussion of structural factors focuses on the environment in which single working mothers function. They function with conflicting demands deriving from work and family and within a context that does not account for the value of reproductive labour (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1990). Knowing their environment allows us to understand their adaptive responses.

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It aids us in determining the continuous and dynamic context in which problem solving takes place.

The transactions of single working mothers with their environment are greatly affected by the manner in which society defines and responds to caring. Caring is defined by Baines et al. (1998) "as the mental, emotional and physical effort in looking after, responding to, and supporting others" (p.11). Women predominately fulfill this role. Because caring involves emotional and mental effort and is considered natural for women, it is largely invisible. The costs and benefits of caring are not factored into current definitions of labour, leisure and parenting (Pascal, 1986). That is, the full extent to which caring consumes the economic, physical, mental and emotional resources of a segment of the population is not recognized. This lack of recognition is coupled with the real importance of caring in producing productive members of society (Ferguson, 1998).

The concept of caring traditionally has been narrowly defined. Feminists view caring not only in terms of personal attachments but also in terms of power and economic relationships. (Baines et al, 1998). Mullaly (1993) says the feminist perspective regards the family as a social institution along with other institutions such as the market place and the welfare state.

The undervaluing of caring illustrates how systemic inequities exist between men and women (Folbre, 1997). These inequities manifest themselves in how the responsibilities and requirements of caring limit women's opportunities and create major costs and consequences for them (Baines et al. 1998). Single working mothers are more susceptible to poverty, to limited vocational opportunities and to role strain (Katy, 1989; Lero & Brockman, 1993; Paris 1990).

The conceptualization of caring needs to change to conform with the realities faced by

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women care givers. They have to face the reality of having to fulfil the motherhood mandate (Prentice and Ferguson, 1997). To conceptualize caring requires an understanding of how the satisfaction of nurturing children and the resentment of meeting care giving obligations and normative expectations become interwined. The contradictions in care giving are not accurately portrayed because of the perception that women enter into motherhood naturally (Baines et al, 1998).

A definition of caring needs to integrate the emotional and physical dimensions (Ferguson, 1998). Disciplines such as psychology have focused on emotional and psychological aspects while disregarding the physical and tangible aspects (Pascal, 1986). An appreciation of the emotional and material issues in caring is necessary in order to understand how mothers approach it. This allows for an understanding of the instrumental "caring about" dimension, and the affective "caring for" dimension (Prentice & Ferguson, 1997). For example, when delegating the care of their children, mothers are not only concerned about supervision and stimulation, they are also concerned about their child's emotional needs being met. The emotional well being of the child is often predicated on them having stable and attentive care givers who can ensure the child is feeling secure and accepted.

Duffy (1988) says the socialization of women into the ideology of motherhood limits them from exploring alternative ways of living. According to Baines et al. (1998) females assume the role of informal care givers to children and learn to develop altruistic patterns of interaction. Males are socialized to be achievement oriented and less dependent on emotional attachments. When females adopt the ethic of care expectation, they forfeit options that are not relational. That is, they move toward options related to motherhood and materialism. The latter is defined by the

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researcher as the acquisition of property and consumer products.

The role of women in reproduction and care giving is reinforced by the patriarchal system. Patriarchy is defined by Ursel (1992) as the control of women's productive and reproductive labour by men. Reproductive labour (birth and child rearing) is not assigned a monetary value and therefore is considered outside the market system. Reproductive labour is considered by Ursel (1992) as those "activities involving procreation, socialization and the daily maintenance of future labour." Production on the other hand, is defined by Waring (1988) as those activities that generate surplus value. Surplus value is also known as profit in the marketplace. The cost of reproduction is assumed by women with their dependency on men and the welfare state (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1990).

Lone parent women are dependent on productive partners, the welfare state and the labour market to offset the cost of their reproductive labour. Their role as care givers often limits vocational development and occupational choices. They frequently occupy part-time, low paying and unskilled jobs while also relying on income transfers from the government (Moen, 1989). For example, benefits such as the Child Tax Benefit (CTB) and Child Related Income Support Program (CRISP) are accessed after a parent demonstrates a certain income level.

A greater recognition of the value of caring in Canada is being deterred by a return to the neo-conservative view of social policies being "no longer affordable," Such views represent a move toward privatizing responsibilities through the family and the market place (Pulkingham & Ternowetsky, 1996; Lochhead & Shalla, 1996). The transfer of income from the productive sector or market place to the reproductive sector is accomplished with social policies (Armstrong & Armstrong 1990). The Child Tax Benefit has been dramatically altered. The Canada Assistance

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Plan (CAP) has been eliminated and replaced by the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) (Pulkingham & Ternowetsky, 1996). Changes in these programs will have a major impact on the family life and economic well being of working and non-working single parents.

The switch from the CAP to CHST means the provinces will have more power but less money. Under CAP, the provinces received matching funds for social programs and were expected to adhere to certain standards. Under CHST, the provinces receive block funding and the authority to determine eligibility for funding (Pulkingham & Ternowetsky, 1996). The consequence of such a step is that with more authority and fewer dollars, provinces such as Manitoba have introduced programs that force the parents of school aged children on social assistance to find employment (Lochead & Shalla, 1996). Many of these parents are expected to accept employment in low wage positions as well as maintain the economic and care giving needs of their children. The loss in federal funding and control could also jeopardize programs such as CRISP and the social assistance supplement program that serve as a buffer for low income single working parents.

The creation of obstacles for women to collect social assistance has an impact on single working mothers. Manitoba is invoking eligibility criteria requiring mothers to pursue child support payments. According to Pulkingham & Ternowetksy, (1997) this reinforces the dependency of women on male labour market activity and shifts responsibility for caring further away from the state. The creation of such obstacles may also serve to discourage women from applying for social assistance.

Changes to the Child Tax Benefit (CTB) are supposed to result in more income for children of low income families. According to Pulkingham & Ternowetsky (1997) and the

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Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD, 1997), the change will not result in new money

for families but, instead, a partial reallocation of funds from reductions in federal transfer

payments. Overall, the benefit to families is being offset by losses in funds historically used for the

poor.

The change in the CTB results in the benefit being more tied to the requirement to work.

Although the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) is not tied to work status, it is designed to

strengthen the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor. The provinces will be able

to deduct a portion of the C.C.T.B from the income assistance payments made to families. The

portion that is deducted is the same amount as the previous Working Income Supplement (W.I.S.)

Because W.I.S is based on the work status of parents and not on the financial needs of children, it

is not an enriched benefit to children, but instead a form of low wage subsidy. The modifications

in C.T.B are part of a larger movement to reduce income assistance levels while also increasing

the requirement to work.. A low wage subsidy makes low paying jobs more acceptable even when

those jobs do no pay enough to support a family. A subsidy also has the effect of enlarging the

labour pool and, subsequently, applying downward pressure on wages (Pulkingham &

Ternowetsky, 1997).

Current systems of financing child care are designed to maintain the prevailing economic

and ideological thinking which emphasizes individual rather than collective responsibility for the

care of children (Lochead & Shalla, 1996). Eligibility for child care subsidies is based on

employment status and the special social needs of children (Baines et al, 1991). The system

creates a class of consumer users who are able to afford the full cost of child care and a class of

client users who must demonstrate eligibility for subsidy. In this way, child care services are

defined as both a market service and a form of welfare (Prentice & Ferguson, 1997).

The child care system is generally defined as both the informal and formal care that occurs outside the family system. The informal sector refers to family, friends and private care providers while the formal sector refers to licensed family day-cares and child care centers. The latter form of care is subject to government regulations relating to the custodial care of children. Among other factors, regulations are in place to ensure children, among other factors, have an adequate number of care givers to meet their basic need for supervision, food and personal care (Ferguson, 1998).

A parents' preference for a child care option, whether it be a family day care, in home care or a child care centre, is based not only on the options reliability and availability, but also on the amount of attention and affection given to the child in care (Lero, 1985). Parents are drawn to care giving situations that facilitate more attention to the child from the care giver. Therefore, parents with children in licensed child care centres believe low staff turnover and low worker to child ratios are major influences on the quality of care (Ferguson, 1998). Home based care and family day care is usually provided by a single care provider who has the opportunity to develop a more intimate relationship with a child. Depending on the number of children under her care, such a provider can also give them more attention. The presence of these factors contribute to the fostering of more nurturing child-care giver relationships.

The funding of child care in the informal and formal sectors does not adequately address the different circumstances of women. High income earning women are more able to afford child care and benefit from tax deductions. Tax credits and tax deductions are available to women who care for their children in the home or who utilize informal private care. Eligibility for a deduction

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is dependent on the care provider producing receipts, and therefore does not apply to undocumented informal care which forms part of the "underground economy." The system clearly favors high income earning women by providing incentives for them to qualify for higher deductions. Women who remain in the home to care for children are eligible only for credits that do not offer the same potential return (Ferguson, 1998).

Differences in the valuing of women's care giving are evident in the formal child care system. Day care subsidies are only available to those who demonstrate eligibility or need ,and thus

divides users into either client or consumer categories. Consumer users are valued because of their ability to afford child care services while client users are subjected to income testing and eligibility requirements that promote stigmatization (Prentice & Ferguson, 1997).

Women who choose to use the informal child care system should be eligible for more tax benefits than are currently available. For many women informal care provides the affordability, flexibility and accessibility that formal care cannot offer. Also, it can conform to parental expectations for care giving (i.e. home based care) (Ferguson, 1998).

The trend toward streamlining social programs to make them more affordable is contributing to the undervaluing of caring. Changes in social policies are justified by reinforcing the ideology of parental responsibility for caring and providing. Lochead & Shalla, (1996) say the reductions in federal-provincial transfers, and the loss of the standards provided by C.A.P, will result in the provinces being forced to re-evaluate eligibility for social assistance and child care subsidies. Mothers will, subsequently, be under more pressure to accept low wage employment without being able to count on having affordable child care.

Caring can only be made more visible with progressive social policies that transfer income to reproductive labour and equalize the gender imbalance. A policy can be considered progressive when the needs of children and care givers are placed ahead of the influence of the market economy (Lochhead & Shalla, 1996). Pressures in the economy have resulted in shrinking government revenues and a renewed emphasis on individual self reliance and private responsibility for caring (Pulkingham & Ternowetsky, 1996).

Women assume an inordinate amount of the burden of caring due to a process of socialization and a system of patriarchy. Progressive social policies are needed in order to reduce this gender imbalance (Ferguson, 1998). Caring must be elevated to the stature of institutions like the education system with more funding going to the informal and formal sectors and with acknowledgment given to the care given at home.

ii) Workplace Policies and Benefits

This section is an overview of the literature on family supportive workplace policies and benefits. Workplace policies and benefits are generally viewed in terms of tangible benefits such as time off from work and financial assistance for childcare. These benefits can also include the psychological support that occurs when an employer demonstrates a high degree of empathy and understanding toward an employee. The section will focus mainly on the structural dimension of the supportive workplace.

This study is concerned with parents' preferences among such policies and benefits. It is important, however, to understand the forces that inhibit and promote the establishment of a family supportive workplace. One perspective is to view policies aimed at supporting parents in the workplace as a movement toward social justice. Another perspective is to recognize the

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economic benefits to government, employers and Canadian society accrued by reducing welfare

dependency and strengthening the capabilities of current and future labour force participants

(Lero & Brockman, 1991).

The feedback from employed single parents about their policy preferences is intended to

help employers understand how work interferes with family life. Although some writers have

suggested employers are motivated out of a sense of social responsibility (Wartwick and Cochran,

1985; Davis, 1983), this thesis is focussed on how workplace policies and benefits can benefit

employers by stabilizing the workplace and maximizing profits. Employers who support workers

by meeting their needs as parents can expect more productivity and commitment from them.

Family responsive workplace policies can take a variety of forms. Raabe (1990) has

identified flexible schedules, alternative work patterns (part-time, job sharing), parental leaves,

sick child care or family leaves, financial assistance with childcare and workplace information and

referral as the most common forms. Flexible scheduling and alternate work patterns may require

workplace restructuring at limited cost while paid leaves and financial assistance with childcare

may involve extensive costs. Family responsive policies can also represent something intangible

such as changes in attitude and management style. Supervisors who are more understanding of

work/family dilemmas are able to fit their management style to meet the needs of employees

(Galinsky & Stein, 1990).

Employers have not only been slow to implement family responsive workplace policies,

but have also been resistant to having them externally imposed upon them. According to Paris

(1990), government legislation that forces an employer to be more responsive to family demands

is viewed as excess interference. Canadian companies see neither government nor unions as

needing to play a major role in employee-family issues. Paris (1990) in citing a survey of Canadian companies, found that 79.9 % considered employees to have the primary responsibility while 50.4% said employers have secondary responsibility. Of the reporting companies, 15.5% gave government secondary responsibility.

While many employers in Paris's (1990) study recognized how work can be affected by family life, this recognition has not resulted in companies accepting more responsibility for implementing policies. Auerbach (1990) says it is a reflection of corporate culture to been seen as independent of work/family issues. Many company executives are unaware of the extent to which employees are affected by work/family issues. There is a reluctance to even acknowledge the existence of the problem. In Paris' (1990) study, 2% of Canadian companies reported doing needs assessments while 3% were contemplating doing so.

The adoption of family responsive policies are viewed negatively by companies that adhere to a traditional view of organizational behaviour. Fernandez (1986) believes such policies are too costly and impractical for companies to consider. Changing work schedules and training replacement staff would involve higher costs. Some argue that increasing wages would better meet the needs of families than specific programs (Aldous, 1990). Family policies such as leaves and childcare assistance are impractical because they create a situation where employees are singled out according to family status and are given additional benefits based on that status.

Accommodating family issues can also complicate the management process by infusing personal issues into the company's focus on accomplishing business objectives. It can undermine the management of employees by affording them more autonomy than is appropriate (Christensen et al. 1990). By tying not only income but also benefits to the employee-employer linkage,

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employees can feel trapped into job positions because of the availability of a benefit- -such as on-site daycare. This can present problems for companies regarding staff morale and when restructuring and downsizing are being considered (Parker & Hall, 1992).

The maximization of profits and the establishment of a more stable and efficient workplace is a major reason for employers to implement family responsive workplace policies. Such policies can be beneficial by increasing recruitment potential, raising staff morale, alleviating employee stress, reducing absenteeism and decreasing turnover (Friedman, 1986; Raabe, 1990; Paris, 1990). According to Paris (1990),bottom line considerations such as cost effective ways to increase competitiveness are more likely to motivate corporations than social responsibility arguments. Furthermore, there is some recognition amongst corporations that workers can become distracted by family issues (Kopelman, 1986). Many organizations have adopted the view that family responsive policies will be needed in the future in order to maintain a competitive advantage (Covin & Brush, 1993; Fernandez, 1986).

Researchers of work/family conflict have identified a number of characteristics of organizations that are responsive to family issues. According to Galinsky and Stein (1990), work-family issues must first be considered both as a legitimate aspect of the organization and relevant to the organization's mission. Second, there must be support from the major stakeholders in the organization. Third, family issues must be responded to in a strategic manner with careful planning and not in a piecemeal or "ad hoc fashion." Fourth, the objectives of the organization and the needs of personnel must be seen as mutually compatible. Fifth, there needs to be an openness to making the traditional workday more flexible. Finally, the organizational culture must be conducive to work/family solutions.

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Organizations evolve toward developing family responsive work policies. The process begins with an awareness of work/family issues. Next, the problem needing to be solved is identified. This can occur by assessing employee needs and determining the availability of community resources. Comparison with competitors is important in understanding whether profits are being effectively utilized. How a policy will be accepted by employees can be assessed by examining the organization's culture. Programs are then established to address the problem. Finally, the organization moves toward developing an overall plan (Galinsky & Stein 1990; Paris, 1990; Covin & Brush, 1993).

Few companies reach the point where they have comprehensive family policy plans. Such plans not only include leave policies, childcare assistance and flexible scheduling, but also health and wellness plans, employment assistance plans (EAP), supervisor training and parenting seminars. Some organizations offer cafeteria style benefit plans where employees can choose from an array of benefits of comparable value. This can offset the equity issue of non-parenting employees receiving fewer benefits and can also allow for tailoring benefits to meet the needs of specific families (Raabe, 1990; Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Fernandez, 1986).

The utilization and popularity of comprehensive family responsive plans was explored by Fernandez (1986) in a study of 374 American companies. Only 8 % of the companies had cafeteria plans while 62% were in favour of them. The study included employees of the companies and concluded that 39% of female workers with children under the age of 5 years old were willing to sacrifice other benefits for more childcare. This compared to 22% of women with children over the age of 11 years old. Fernandez also found that 38% of respondents selected the company because of the childcare assistance while 69% said the benefits were an incentive for them to

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remain with the company. Sixty three percent of the respondents said they had a more positive attitude about the company and 50% said they would recommend the company to others because of the benefits.

In Canada, Duxbury et al. (1992) have outlined a number of family responsive changes that should occur in the workplace. Programs that were recommended were onsite daycare, child care vouchers, benefit packages, pro-rated benefits for part-time workers, family leaves and greater work time and work location flexibility. The Great West Life Assurance Company of Winnipeg, employs 2,000 people, 70% of whom are women. The company permits some employee flexing between the working hours of 6:00 am-6:00pm. There is also a resource library, information sessions and parenting groups (Haig, 1996). The Western Glove Works of Winnipeg employs approximately 900 workers in craft-work and is one of only three companies in the city that has an onsite daycare. Workers who use the daycare have their daycare supplement of close to $50.00 per month covered by the company.

An employers' hesitancy to provide family supportive benefits and policies is dependent on a number of factors. First, there is a lack of understanding around the dilemma workers face balancing work and family responsibilities. Second, there is the longstanding ideology around the separation of work and family. Finally, there is an inability to see the benefits of aiding workers by helping them overcome the problem of balancing these responsibilities. Employers who implement family supportive benefits and policies view them as an investment in the long-term viability of their company or organization. Being supportive to the family needs of workers can been seen in the same light as an investment in infrastructure and training.

This study explores the different kinds of workplace policies and benefits workers prefer.

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The extent to which a policy or benefit is desirable to a parent depends on their needs, attitudes and circumstances. Lero et al (1990) found that parents with children aged between 18 months and five years old placed a much higher value on work-site childcare than parents with younger children. Parents with younger children, on the other hand, placed a higher value on flexible work hours than the parents of older preschool children. Raabe (1990) questioned whether unpaid benefits such as flexible hours addresses the needs of lower paid workers who face the dilemma of being able to afford the cost of child care.

Covin and Brush (1993) and Piotrkowski (1979) talk about the corporate culture and the myth of separate worlds when describing the attitude that family issues should not crossover into the workplace. In Paris' (1990) study, both employees and employers rated responsibility for accommodating employees work/family conflicts as the employee's responsibility. This study concluded that a relatively high number of employees (44%) were satisfied with the extent to which their employers were assisting them.

The use of data that is statistically representative of employee preferences would not be a completely reliable indicator of what policies and benefits should be implemented. According to Raabe (1990), different policies may have different effects and vary in usefulness for particular workers. Policies need to be made work-site specific. The under-utilization of the onsite daycare at Western Glove Works contradicts the value placed on such a benefit in many studies (Lero et al. 1988;Paris, 1990). In order to meet the needs of workers, it is important to utilize a careful and flexible approach that is open to experimentation by both managers and workers (Covin and Brush, 1993).

In summary, this literature review has focused on two themes. The first theme is the

individual's capacity to cope with and adapt to her environment. The second theme focused on the role of the state and organization in supporting single working mothers. The use of the eco-systemic perspective allows us to place the individual and the environment into their appropriate contexts. Individual problem solving skills, access to a supportive network, pro-family social policies and supportive workplaces are critical factors in solving the work/family dilemmas of single working mothers. Underlying these individual and policy issues are the structural factors that create such an inordinate need for single working mothers to adapt. In order to understand how structural factors influence adaptation it is necessary to examine the nature of human production and reproduction.

The benefit of using the eco-systemic perspective is that it allows us to examine the individual in the context of the environment. Abrams (1983) model focuses on systems from the vantage point of the individual and, therefore, accounts for the influence of both. According to Frankel (1998), a disadvantage of the eco-systemic approach is that it has become trendy and overused as a theoretical perspective. The ecological framework covers a very broad spectrum and has been redefined by social scientists to fit particular areas of study.

The researcher found that the eco-systemic-perspective conformed with his interpretation of how individuals adapt to their work and parenting role and how social and workplace policy can mitigate adaptation. The adaptation to the parenting role has often been seen as an individual problem rather than a structural problem (Murdock, 1983), resulting in mothers in the study struggling to fulfil the often incompatible roles of care giver and wage earner. The eco-systemic perspective permits us to discuss characteristics of individual functioning along with the broader structural context.

Chapter III

Methodology

A qualitative design using the mode of analysis from grounded theory has been chosen as a methodology because of its strategic approach to data collection and analysis. This chapter describes the approach used in analysing the data. The research questions upon which the study is based are addressed as is the process used in constructing the interview guide and in conducting the interviews.

i)Research Questions and Methodology

The objective of this research is to use a qualitative methodology to examine the needs of single working parents of children under the age of six years old (preschool). The study addresses two fundamental questions. First, it asks parents about their needs as care givers and workers. In particular, it asks what resources do they require in order to parent effectively? Second, the study asks how the parents see the workplace being modified or changed in order to support the parenting role.

The study is exploratory in nature with the participants describing their work and family experiences in a way that is meaningful to them. Past and present parenting experiences are discussed. Although the seven parents in the study have preschool children, four also have school aged children. The researcher did not attempt to exclude these children from the discussion. The approach is to allow the parents to describe how the needs of their children are influenced by their working. By doing so, the study intended to uncover how the work and family domains are interrelated.

ii)Qualitative Research

Grounded theory is one of several qualitative methodologies. Qualitative research is oriented toward uncovering the nature of a person's experiences such as balancing work and family

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responsibilities. It can give intricate details of a phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods. Qualitative designs can lead to the discovery of dimensions behind little known phenomena. They also provide unique and fresh perspectives on well researched areas (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Other qualitative methodologies include ethnography, phenomenology and participant observation. All of these methods represent different ways to both approach and conceptualize a research area. They focus on distinct aspects of the research area and utilize different methods of data collection. As well, qualitative designs differ over the analytic or interpretive procedures that are used to arrive at findings or theories (Patton 1990;Rossman & Freeman, 1993; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Qualitative methods approach data collection and analysis differently. Some methods claim to use no analysis, but rather, attempt to present data based on the actual way it has been reported by the subjects in the study. Even though the subject accounts may not be an accurate reflection of what is occurring around a phenomena, they are considered valid because it is free of the researcher's bias and influence. On the other hand, some approaches recognize the importance of ordering and reducing data while still retaining their accuracy. Although the intention is to present an unbiased conceptualization of the data, invariably the process of selection and interpretation constitutes a form of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

iii)Grounded Theory as a Qualitative Research Method

Grounded theory is oriented toward building theoretically informed interpretations of data. It is a systematic approach to data collection and to analysis of data that relates to a phenomenon. There is a symbiotic relationship between data collection, analysis and theory. Thus, the purpose is not to begin with a theory and then verify it, but instead to focus on an area and allow for a theory

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to emerge. Unlike other approaches, the accuracy of data is considered less important than the ongoing and reciprocal relationship between data collection, analysis and theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

This study will use a mode of analysis from grounded theory to answer the questions of parental needs and workplace policy preferences. It is a process of generating conceptual categories and their properties from the data and then examining them for differences and similarities (Glaser & Strauss, 1967;Filstead, 1979).

The study does not utilize grounded theory principles of data collection. Semi-structured interviews and not participant observation was used to collect the data. The researcher used a structured interview approach because of feasibility and because it has been used in other grounded theory studies to yield useful data (Thomson, 1991).

The study does not attempt to build theory, but rather uses the grounded theory mode of analysis to answer specific questions regarding parental needs and policy preferences. This study uses the grounded theory mode of analysis to answer the researcher's preconceived questions and to accommodate his integration of workplace policies and benefits and social policy into an interpretation of the data.

In order to understand how grounded theory principles of analysis are used in this study, it is important to understand the basic premise behind the methodology. Grounded theory approaches are fundamentally different from approaches that are derived by logical deduction through prior assumptions. Verification of existing theory is viewed as too limiting and not reflective of peoples' realities. Theory is used to provide concepts and labels to neatly tie together the data. In more simple terms, applying theory to the data forces the situation to fit the theory rather than vice versa

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(Filstead, 1979; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Patton, 1990).

According to Filstead (1979) grounded theory is a more humanistic way of understanding social reality. It recognizes the evolving, negotiated view of the social order as neither fixed nor static but as shifting and dynamic. The researcher is an active agent in making sense of realities he encounters instead of reacting mechanically to role expectations. Patton (1990) reaffirms this when he describes the analytical process as meant to organize and elucidate telling the story of the data.

Grounded theory focuses on the discovery of theory rather than on verification of theory (Filstead, 1979). With verification, more of an emphasis is placed on gathering accurate evidence and verifying hypotheses. Instead, the generation of categories from the data requires an approach that is not only unobstructed by prior assumptions, but is also focussed on the development of categories having properties and their dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Conceptual density is as important to grounded theory as the gathering of accurate information is to logical-deductive theory (Glaser, 1992). It refers both to the density of the categories and the linkages between them. Density emerges when categories contain properties that have sufficient dimensions. Categories that are interrelated with their properties and with other categories are considered to have adequate linkage (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

According to Glaser & Strauss (1967), grounded theory can be identified as either substantive or formal. Substantive theory refers to a substantive or empirical area of sociological inquiry, such as workplace policy preferences, time constraints, economic need, supportive networks and emotional and physical energy. Formal theory refers to a conceptual area of sociological inquiry. This might include such areas as normative expectations around parenting and the devaluing of care giving.

This researcher was initially interested in the substantive area of parental care giving needs

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and workplace supports. The plan was to answer the research questions through the comparative analysis of data within the same substantive area. Therefore, data was collected on the needs of parents and the types of policies and benefits that they either preferred or had available to them. Viewing the data in this way is more substantive and concrete than formal and abstract.

The researcher eventually blended aspects of the formal and substantive in his analysis. The initial outcome of the collection and analysis of the data was an individual problem solving perspective. Upon reviewing this approach it was decided that it did not address the question of structural factors. That is, the analysis addressed how single working mothers overcame limited resources but not how they were placed in that position. Subsequently, formal concepts such as normative expectations and the devaluing of care giving were introduced in order to explain these factors.

There are a number of reasons for using a qualitative methodology for this study of single mothers of preschoolers. It provides an opportunity for the intricate relationship between work and family to be examined in closer detail. For example, there have been numerous quantitative studies that have produced findings indicating greater role strain among working single parents of small children (Goldberg et al, 1992; Kamerman & Kahn, 1984; Folbre, 1987). The relationship between role strain and other factors is shown using statistical analysis without exploring how these relationships emerge.

In the Goldberg et al. (1990) study, quality of childcare, stage of single parenthood, work demands, social support, mother's well being and child behaviours were correlated. The study found that levels of role strain were related mostly to parental perceptions of their children's needs. Negative perceptions were offset by the existence of satisfactory childcare and by support, both at work and

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at home.

Although the above quantitative study was able to find associations between two variables that imply a causal connection, such associations can at best be considered only a "static snapshot." This kind of research often obscures the concrete experiences of people by not taking into account the dynamic processes of families. By not capturing the quality of the work experience, they are limited in their ability to shed light on how this experience impinges on family life (Piotrkowski, 1979).

The researcher believes this qualitative methodology relates well to an eco-systemic framework. First, both modalities emphasize individual or collective interaction with the environment. Second, they are also similar in that the analysis focuses on finding contextual factors rather than cause and effect relationships. Third, structural and socially constructed conditions are accounted for in the analysis. And finally, both are able to explore opportunities as well as limitations in the environment.

According to the eco-systemic perspective, the family and work roles are open systems that can be conceptualized in terms of the elaborate interchanges between one another and their environment. According to Kanter (1977) the specific interchanges and transactions between work and family are not covered within quantitative research approaches. Research on work and family dynamics needs to consider the behaviour and experiences of people in these situations by looking at them in both contexts. Piotrkowski (1979) further argues that future research must explore the "concrete, micro-interactional processes that connect the specifics of work life and the psychological processes of families" (p11).

A grounded theory mode of analysis enables the researcher is able to capture the concrete

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experiences of people and view them view them in context. As was mentioned, it is a process where concepts are identified and subsequently categorized. The intention of the initial step of identifying concepts is to permit the subjects of the study to openly share their views of work/family life. The process of categorizing and identifying properties within categories further describes individual experiences.

A grounded theory mode of analysis was selected for several reasons as the most appropriate method to address the research topic. This method allows the researcher to analyze data in an emerging manner for the purpose of revealing a central concept in the research. It allows the researcher to take a phenomenon and break it into categories that can be analysed according to their context, action/interaction strategies and conditions. This mode of analysis is also designed to maximize internal validity by minimizing researcher bias. The type of bias being referred to involves the researcher organizing the data collection around a set of prior assumptions. The process of generating as many categories as possible and then conceptually relating them to a group of core categories will limit the effects of bias. It allows the analysis to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The use of a modified grounded theory mode of analysis allowed the researcher to capture some of the complexities of the work and family relationship. The data collection process begins by asking participants about their situation as parents and workers and how they respond to this situation. The analysis of the data begins with the first step of open coding, the labelling of phenomenon. By starting at such a basic level and moving through the process of grouping phenomena into categories, the researcher minimized the temptation of trying to make sense of the data in the beginning stages of collection. This is known as forcing the data. Forcing the data can lead

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to the researcher overlooking data that contradicts his assumptions (Glaser, 1990).

In a grounded theory mode of data analysis, there is an evolving process of inquiry that occurs through the procedures of open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In open coding, the data is compared, contrasted, conceptualized and categorized. The data is examined sentence by sentence and converted into discrete incidents or concepts that are scrutinized for similarities and differences. Similar concepts are grouped together, and given a conceptual name called a category.

In the next analytical technique, axial coding, the data is reassembled in a new form. Categories are developed by searching the data for properties of a category. "Each category is delineated in terms of four subcategories: the conditions that give rise to it, the context in which it is embedded, the strategies by which it is handled, and the consequences of those strategies" (Strauss& Corbin, 1990, p.97). There is a ongoing process of proposing tentative relationships and checking the data for evidence to support or refute these relationships.

iv) Methodology/Research Design

The researcher developed a model using the grounded theory mode of analysis. Three of the four sub-categories used in Strauss and Corbin's (1990) model were utilized. They are context (properties), strategies and intervening conditions.

An argument can be made for using the principles of grounded theory analysis in a study. There is a lack of a consensus among researchers on the use of a specific model. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe a paradigm model involving causal conditions, phenomena, context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies and consequences. Thomson (1992) used a model consisting of properties, strategies and conditions. This model was originally suggested during the proposal

stage. Swanson (1986) uses the 6Cs model of consequences, causes, conditions, context, contingencies and covariance. Both models apply the basic precepts of grounded theory in a varying manner.

The decision to use the following mode of analysis was based on the researcher's assessment of the data analysis process. The categories-context (properties)-strategies-intervening conditions approach provides a way to manage the data while also furnishing useful analysis. The categories are conceptualized in a manner that focuses on the strategies used to respond to them.

The categories of managing emotional well being, care giving and work were developed during the process of open coding. The study was focused on determining the needs of single working mothers. Concepts were identified and subsequently grouped under categories that addressed the phenomena in question. Categories that encompassed the realms of managing emotional well being, care giving and work allowed the researcher to identify strategies that facilitate managing. Using the term "managing" to introduce the categories allowed the researcher to define them as part of a process that is responded to within a framework of contexts, strategies and conditions.

The subcategory known as context describes the attributes or characteristics of a category. A property refers to an attribute that exists along a continuum (Swanson, 1986). The properties in this study are not attributes that can be dimensionalized. They instead represent the researcher's attempt to identify concepts that capture the essence of the category.

The properties serve, in effect, as dominant themes. The choice of properties was based on their being conceptually distinct and inclusive rather than being dimensional. Context is a set of properties belonging to a category. The context acts as a framework for carrying out strategies (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). If we examine a strategy such as support building, for example, it is

important to know the context in which it occurs.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), grounded theory is an action/interactional method of theory building. Strategies are thus a central category in this approach. It does not matter whether a study involves individuals, groups or collectives, there is always action/interaction that is aimed at managing, handling or responding to a phenomenon. Interaction can be internal as well as external.

Action/interaction strategies have certain characteristics. They are evolving in nature and thus can be studied in terms of sequences, or in terms of movement, or change over time. They are also purposeful and goal oriented. That is, action/interaction occurs for a reason and is done in response to or to manage a phenomenon. It is important to understand why there is an absence of action/interaction in a situation when it would normally be expected (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The study identifies strategies pertaining to the management of emotional well being, care giving and work. The strategies reflect a process where mothers respond to the need for emotional support, quality childcare, individual problem solving skills, progressive social policies and family responsive workplace practices. They suggest that mothers are engaged in interaction with the self and with their environment.

According to Swanson (1986) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) there are always intervening conditions that act to either facilitate or constrain action/interaction strategies. They can be considered as the broader structural factors pertaining to a phenomenon. Intervening conditions, according Strauss and Corban (1990), can include economic status, individual biography, time, space, career and history. In this study, they encompass specific areas such as the presence of progressive workplace and social policies and the availability of a supportive personal network. These areas are structural because they influence the individual and therefore have a bearing on the type of strategies

employed.

As the final phase of the analytic strategy, selective coding is used to identify the core category, or the central idea of the study. Analysis at this stage becomes more abstract as all categories are related to the core category. In selective coding, the researcher tries to follow the same steps as in the earlier axial coding phase. This involves analyzing data according to their context, strategies and conditions.

The researcher conducted a review of the literature after completing the axial coding phase. The researcher used a modified version of selective coding by comparing concepts derived from the data with concepts in the literature. The same context-strategies-conditions paradigm that was used in the axial coding phase was used in the selective coding phase. This review was helpful in developing a theme on the integration of work and family. Employers were not part of the study and therefore, their perspective was missing. It blended the experiences of the mothers with the literature on how organizations can be transformed into supportive workplaces. The review also explored how social policies can enhance integration. This required the use of literature on the centrality of caring in women's lives.

In summary, the researcher uses a grounded theory mode of analysis in order to address the research questions. He decided to exclude causal conditions and consequences from the paradigm used by Strauss and Corbin (1990) because he believed they would not have aided the analysis. An attempt to determine causal conditions would have introduced a cause and effect dimension to a study that viewed problems from an eco-systemic perspective. Further, the identification of consequences for failing to carry out a strategy is too hypothetical for the process being studied. For the mothers in the study, the choice to not engage in strategies to manage emotional well being, care giving and

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work did not exist.

The findings section represents the open coding and axial coding phases of the data analysis. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The initial step in open coding was to identify incidents and concepts by making theoretical notes. These were intended to draw the researcher's attention to potential categories and relationships. The intention was to focus on the general experiences of the mothers and therefore, the notes were descriptive and lacked analytical elements. The notes were identified in italics in the transcripts. Following the identification of incidents, the researcher proposed three tentative categories. The three categories of managing emotional well being, managing care giving and managing work were then checked against the data. They are identified as bold capitalized abbreviations in the transcripts. Next, the researcher proceeded to manually uncover subcategories within the categories. They are represented by red ink on the transcripts.

The final phase of axial coding involved the assembling of the categories and subcategories. The process was not only based on the analysis of the transcripts, but was also intuitive. In the beginning, the notes were disjointed and reflected tentative notions regarding relationships. Through constant examination of the data, the researcher modified and refined the categories. Consistencies and inconsistencies within the categories were noted.

v) Sampling

A theoretical sampling strategy was utilized in order to be consistent with a qualitative method of data analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to theoretical sampling as the kind of sampling that is used to generate categories. That is incidents, not persons, are sampled; sampling is guided by the analysis and articulation of emerging theoretical concepts. Theoretical sampling or purposeful

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sampling, is defined as "selecting participants based on the needs of the study" (Gilgun, 1991). The researcher wanted not only single parents of preschool children, but also parents who were accessible and willing to share their experiences and were accessible.

The selection of single employed parents of preschool children was intended to provide control over two areas of generality. First, it was to aid in focussing and framing the study on a conceptual level. Second, it was intended to limit the scope of the population (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Single parent users of child care resources are predominately employed people and almost all are care givers of preschool children. One of the parameters of the study was to learn how workplace policies and benefits can aid family life. Therefore, the selection of this population had to ensure those topics were of relevance. The one mother who was not employed was considered appropriate due to her recent employment experience and her desire to relay her own work/family experiences. Daycare users who are self employed were not included due to the nature of self employment. Although there are work/family dilemmas for these parents, self employment constitutes a different form of work environment.

The original target group for the study was single parent users of Winnipeg licensed child care centres. They were the parents of preschool children who were employed in wage earning or salaried positions. The recruitment effort resulted in seven women volunteering to participate. The seven women included one unemployed parent and one non-resident of Winnipeg. One mother had no children in daycare but did have one in daycare during the same year. Another mother used a private care giver rather than a licensed centre.

During the month of December, 1997, the researcher telephoned twenty Executive Directors of licensed child care centres in the north end of Winnipeg. A letter addressed to the board

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chairperson and a copy of the bulletin was mailed or personally delivered to the twelve centres whose Directors agreed to review the request to promote the study. The telephone call to the Director was meant to establish a more personal context for the request. The researcher decided not to bypass the Director and go directly to the board if the former was not supportive. The rationale was that the board would always support the Director on such a matter. The contact with the twelve centres resulted in a positive response from three child care centres that were willing to post the bulletin.

Winnipeg Parent newsmagazine was approached and subsequently agreed to advertise for volunteers in their December/January edition. The ad resulted in 20 inquiries and six volunteers. The researcher had erred by failing to mention in the bulletin that the target group was parents of a preschool children. The outcome was numerous calls from parents with only school aged children.

The childcare centres were asked to be access points in terms of reaching potential respondents. The intention was to recruit participants through an advertising method. This consisted of an advertisement in the daycare newsletter (see Appendix C) or through an insert sent home with the children. Interested parents were asked to contact the researcher directly. The identity of the participants and the content of the interviews were not disclosed to the child care centres.

Originally a sample size of ten was estimated as necessary to generate sufficient categories around the phenomenon in question. The number ten was a rough estimate of the number needed to ensure that the data was more conceptually driven than individually driven. Given the difficulties of obtaining data, the researcher believed that sufficient variation was provided with seven interviews. The researcher used his own judgement and the example of another qualitative study (Pauch, 1996) to arrive at this decision. One consideration was that a sample size of seven would provide enough variability to fit within a grounded theory approach instead of a case-study methodology.

The outcome of the recruitment strategy was unexpected. The poor response from the child care centres was disappointing but understandable. The researcher had no prior connection to the centres and had engaged in a single recruiting drive. He did not want to use his connections to the daycare centres in the community where he worked because of a desire to keep his work role separate from his role as researcher. The daycare centres that were visited proved to be very hectic workplaces where time was at a premium. One Director believed none of the parents at his centre would allocate the time to participate there unless they received an honorarium. Another Director did not want her centre to participate because of the potential for violating the parent's privacy. The researcher's overall impression of the poor response was that the centres saw no benefit in promoting the study and had other priorities.

The single volunteer drawn from the centres meant that there would be a reliance on the Winnipeg Parent advertisement. This reduced the size of the sample and resulted in a modification to the target group. There were no other potential research subjects other than those who volunteered. The Winnipeg Parent advertisement produced four volunteers who matched the target group. The other two mothers closely approximated the target group and were thus deemed appropriate for the study. One had a child who turned school age during that calender year. The other mother had just left the workforce but was looking to re-enter.

The interviews were conducted from early December,1997, until late January 1998. The researcher decided not to employ another recruitment strategy. Time constraints were a major consideration in this decision. The researcher was also of the opinion that he had enough data to allow the analysis to proceed in accordance with the principles of the methodological design. The major factor to consider was the variability of the sample.

vi)Participants

The seven mothers who volunteered for the study were all Caucasian and came with a broad range of parenting and work experiences. Biographical information about these women is presented in a way that does not identify them. General occupation categories are used. Children are referred to according to their stage of development. The infant and toddler stage is 0-3 years of age. The preschool stage is generally considered 3-5 years of age but is identified as 4-5 years of age in order to avoid overlap with the toddler stage. Children from the ages of 6 to 11 years old are considered to be school aged. Adolescence refers to ages from 12-17 years old.

Ann works in customer service and production for a small company in the technology field. She is her early 30s and earns in the range of $20,000-$25,000 a year. She has worked for the same company for the past eight years. The company has some formal benefits but no collective bargaining agreement. Her daughter is preschool aged and her son is school aged. The daughter attends a licensed daycare and kindergarten. The daycare provides both children with after school care.

Diane works as a customer service representative for a national company in the transportation field. She is in her late 20s and earns over $40,000 a year. She has been with the company for over 10 years and was transferred to the city from another province. The company has a formal benefits package and a collective bargaining agreement. Her daughter is toddler aged and attends a licensed daycare.

Lynn works in the social services field as a para-professional. She is in her late 30s and earns in the $20,000-25,000 range. She has been in this position for over 5 years. She does receive some benefits and is covered by a collective bargaining agreement. She has three children: a preschooler, a school aged child and an adolescent.

Sue is an equipment operator for a large transportation company. She is in her early 30s and earns over $40,000 a year. She has been in this position for over 16 years. She receives a benefits package and is covered under a collective bargaining agreement. Sue works mostly evenings but also works some daytimes and overnights. She has a preschool aged daughter who is in both nursery school and private care.

Angie works part-time in the retail sector and also attends university part-time. She is in her late teens and earns under $10,000 a year. She has been in the position for under a year and receives no benefits or union coverage. She works mostly daytime, afternoon hours. She has a toddler aged son who attends a licensed daycare.

Barb has been a para-professional for a professional services company for approximately five years. She is in her early 30s and earns from $30,000-$35,000 a year. She receives benefits based on a negotiated arrangement between herself and the employer. She has three children, two school aged sons and a school aged daughter. One of the school aged children was preschool aged during the current year.

Ellen recently left a position with a personal services company. She had been in the position for under one year. She is in her early 30s. She has two children; a school aged son and a preschool aged daughter. Her daughter is physically disabled.

The focus on single parents of pre-school children does not minimize the work/family stress experienced by the parents of school age children. However, preschool children are more costly in terms of alternate care and are generally considered to be more time-consuming (Kamerman & Kahn, 1984; Menaghan, 1983). The period before six years of age involves critical learning and developmental phases. The time and energy spent on locating and sustaining childcare that is

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responsive to the needs of these children differentiates this age group from others. The lack of independence of young children means employed parents have fewer options when childcare is interrupted due to illness or other factors (Kamerman & Kahn, 1984).

Single parents are the focus of this study based on the assumption that they illuminate work/family issues more than other kinds of families. The search for comparisons and similarities among these types of families will raise our understanding of work/family issues. The nature of this study is to address specific questions and not to build a theory. Therefore, the selection of single working parents of preschoolers were selected with the intention of providing answers to the research questions within the scope of a grounded theory mode of data analysis. For example, although there will not be adequate enough variation to build a theory, variation in the sample will be recognized and included in the analysis.

The selection of this sample is relevant to our goal of illuminating work/family issues. It corresponds with the assumption that these parents experience more acutely the consequences of inadequate family responsive workplace policies than two parent households. In studies by Paris (1990) and Fernandez (1986), lone parents placed a high value on such policies and benefits. They were also more likely to report higher work/family stress.

vii) Interview

The interview procedure was explained in advance to the mothers. They were advised over the telephone of the study's focus and the manner in which the interview would be conducted. It was explained that a general interview guide (Appendix D) would be used to facilitate the sharing of information they considered relevant. The mothers were asked to take part in a single one hour interview. They were informed that transcripts and recordings with identifying information were to

be destroyed upon completion of the study.

An interview guide was developed to reflect Swanson's (1986) formal, unstructured interview format. She suggests that the interviewer use a guide that contains a set of brief questions, an outline, or a theme for the interview: the guide can be modified as the focus of the research changes. The guide does not inhibit an open, exploratory approach. It follows Swanson's emphasis on addressing the respondent's major concerns or viewpoints.

The researcher attempted to reach an understanding with the mothers around the tone of the interview. The interview would involve general questions that allowed the participant enough latitude to describe issues that were important to her. The researcher guided the interview by asking for expansion or clarification of a point and by moving onto another question. He requested that the mothers advise him if they felt uncomfortable about discussing a certain area.

The issue of a power and/or authority relationship between the researcher, the childcare centres and the mothers was considered. Such a relationship did not exist because of the voluntary nature of the study. The mothers were advised that they were free to withdraw at any time without consequences. The childcare centres themselves did not have a vested interest in the study and therefore, the question of a power and/or authority relationship was not a factor.

The mothers in the study were assured of confidentiality around the use of their names and the publication of identifying information. The manner in which the information was to be used for analysis was explained to them. That is, the purpose was to not report specific incidences, but instead, to generate categories of ideas for comparative purposes. The mothers were asked to sign a consent form to participate in the study (see Appendix C).

Precautions were taken to safeguard against possible threats to the psychological well being

of the mothers. The researcher was clear at the outset that his role was to investigate work/family issues in the least intrusive manner. The mothers were encouraged not to feel obligated to share information they considered sensitive and private. In the event that a participant became emotionally overwhelmed when recounting experiences during an interview, the researcher planned to be as supportive and understanding as possible. If she was unable to overcome feelings of distress, the researcher intended to terminate the formal part of the interview. The researcher planned to be responsive and accessible to the mothers who had questions or concerns either during or after the interview process. If necessary, he would provide them with telephone numbers and offer guidance around accessing appropriate resources. This could involve referral to a wide range of resources such as crisis and mental health services.

The above precautions did not have to be implemented. A number of the mothers expressed frustration and anxiety when recounting experiences. However, because the interview process was counterbalanced by a debriefing period following the interview that involved small talk, all of the interviews ended in a positive fashion.

A description of the context of the interviews is needed in order to provide insight into the data collection process. The mother's unfamiliarity with the researcher needs to be noted as this can affect the level of trust and the degree of candour (Patton, 1988). His prior contact with six of the mothers was through one to three telephone contacts. One mother met the researcher prior to the interview to review the consent form. Three of the mothers received the consent form before the interview via the mail and fax transmission. The other three mothers did not believe a review of the consent form was necessary before the interview.

The researcher attempted to reduce the effect that unfamiliarity could have on trust. The pre-

interview telephone call was used to not only explain the study, but to also emphasize its relevance and legitimacy. This was done by having an informal discussion on the topic of work/family issues and by highlighting the fact that the study was approved by the University of Manitoba and had passed an ethics review process.

The researcher's gender is a significant part of the context. The purpose of the interview was to obtain information about issues that many consider personal and stressful in nature. Gender differences have been known to have an effect on trust and perceived empathy (Bruning, 1997). The researcher attempted to overcome gender differences by giving a personal account of his work as a graduate student and his subsequent interest in the topic.

The researcher decided not to ask probing questions about former partners or spouses. He believed that a one time interview format did not allow for sufficient trust to be established. Instead, he asked general questions about current supports. A number of mothers mentioned present partners and former spouses in passing, but most did not give detailed descriptions of personal relationships beyond those with their children, friends and immediate family.

The time constraints upon the mothers influenced the interviews, as did the location of the interviews. Six of the mothers expressed difficulty in being able to find time in their schedule. The researcher maintained a commitment to restrict the interviews to one hour. All of the interviews involved informal before and after conversation that exceeded the one hour time frame. The interviews occurred in the family home and thus required the researcher to adapt to the home context. Five of the interviews were interrupted or shortened by care giving responsibilities. The researcher tried to be supportive and understanding by encouraging the mother to stop the interview at any time in order to respond to the children. Despite seeing time as at a premium, he also left time at the end

of the interview to listen to the parents general concerns.

The interviews were conducted under circumstances that affected the nature of the data collection. An interview guide was developed from the literature but was not pretested. The researcher found that this type of interviewing requires an understanding of audio taping and opened ended questioning. The result of having no pilot interviews and an inexperienced interviewer was a process that required honing and developing. That is, the audio taping procedure had to be changed after a small amount of data was lost because of faulty or improperly positioned equipment. The researcher also changed his style of questioning to reflect how the mothers viewed the issues.

viii) Addressing the Issue of Rigor

There are a number of criteria within which rigor can be addressed Sandelowski (1986). identifies three criteria that can be employed when evaluating a study. They are "truth value", "applicability"and "consistency."

Determining truth value answers the question about the credibility of the study. It is equivalent to establishing internal validity. A study contains truth value when it contains sincere and accurate characterizations and interpretations of the phenomenon in question (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). People who read the findings should be able to determine that the information is indeed "true".

Truth value can be compromised by the presence of researcher bias and a lack of thoroughness. Bias occurs when the researcher is unable to separate his experiences from those of the participants. A lack of thoroughness occurs when to the researcher does not spending enough time interviewing respondents and analysing data. This can limit achieving an of understanding the culture and experiences of the respondents (Sandelowski, 1986).

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Truth value in this study was enhanced and limited by a number of methodological issues and decisions. One limitation was the single one hour interview. This limitation was offset by the use of telephone preparatory calls, an informed consent form and a pre-interview warmup. The interview guide was originally limited in that it was developed from the literature and not pilot interviews. This problem was counterbalanced by the researcher modifying his use of the guide throughout the data collection period.

The researcher's orientation and interests also influenced the truth value of the study. As a male non- parent, he lacked an intimate knowledge of the routines and experiences of single parent women. However, he has had significant contact with this group as a professional in a family services agency.

In hindsight, the truth value of the study could have been enhanced by more consultative measures. There was no consultation with members of the target group during the design of the study. There also was no testing of the interview format on members of this group. Such a process would have helped in sensitizing the researcher to potential concepts and categories. On the other hand, the research design was reviewed by the researcher's advisor and other committee members. The findings were also reviewed by the advisor and the result was feedback that stimulated problem solving, minimized distortion of the data, and increased the researcher's sensitivity to the data.

The researcher entered into the study with a professional orientation toward individual casework and a theoretical orientation toward the eco-systemic perspective. The researcher acknowledges that his interpretation of the data occurred from within the framework of his own values and experiences. Myles and Huberman (1984) say that although it is impossible to completely eliminate bias from a study, it is possible to influence its impact on data analysis. The researcher

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concedes that his male gender and casework orientation induced him to adopt an individual-organizational problem solving perspective rather than others such as, for instance, a structural feminist perspective.

The second criterion of applicability refers to the transferability or generality of the findings. Applicability is achieved when the findings are transferable to other subjects, settings, and contexts. Findings must agree with the data from which it has been drawn and must also apply to contexts outside the study situation (Sandelowski, 1986).

Applicability can be affected by the recruitment of participants with a certain status within a sample. This is known as elite bias and can occur when a sample contains the most accessible and articulate members of a group (Sandelowski, 1986). Applicability was addressed by a sampling strategy that reached out to a wide range of potential participants. Some of the participants stood out in terms of their articulation and their accessibility. Others initially expressed interest in the topic area but were not readily accessible or confident in talking about it. They were persuaded to participate after a process of reassurance, explanation and accommodation.

The applicability of a study can also be compromised by the researcher's attempts to make the findings more harmonious than the data suggests. This also known as holistic fallacy (Sandelowski, 1986). The categories that were identified emerged after the data had been scrutinized using the constant comparative method of analysis. Although the categories were intended to be conceptually distinct, they were also subject to potential overlap. The data was also presented in the form of actual quotations in order to facilitate the telling of the story by participants. The congruency of the findings with the data was therefore increased by the data analysis process, the development of the categories and the presentation of the data.

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The third criterion, consistency or dependability, refers to the ability to replicate the study (Sandelowski, 1986). This is the extent to which a study contains findings that can be replicated. Findings are considered to have consistency when another researcher follows the original researcher's methodological design and arrives at a similar, or non-contradictory finding (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The matter of consistency was addressed by describing the procedures and interpretations in sufficient detail so that another researcher could follow the research process. The incorporation of the research questions, a rationale, a methodological section and an interview guide is meant to facilitate an understanding of this process.

In summary, the findings and integration chapters represent an application of a modified grounded theory mode of analysis. The researcher found that grouping the data according to categories of context, strategies and conditions was the most effective way to apply this approach. It allows the researcher to articulate the different elements of the design while at the same time capturing the thoughts and experiences of the respondents.

Chapter IV

Findings

i) Introduction

The following section will explore the mothers' discussion of the task of mothering and working. It will describe how they function given the expectations of these roles and how they benefit from supports at home and at work. The researcher's interpretation of the findings will not include a review of the literature. The intention is to allow the data to speak for itself. However, this does not prevent the data from being heavily influenced by the researcher's personal experiences and his exposure to the literature.

The findings chapter of the qualitative data analysis is followed by a chapter on the influence of a supportive workplace on work/family integration. This chapter is the initial step in describing the processes through which a single working mother attempts to integrate work and family responsibilities.

The mothers in the study work toward managing their emotional well being, their care giving and their working roles. This requires active and intense physical, emotional and intellectual effort to achieve an ideal state of functioning. Striving toward such a state also requires home based supports and workplace policies and benefits. Emotional, care giving and work managment are three broad categories that have been identified in order to help describe this process.

Achieving integration is undermined by the manner in which women are situated in the care giving role. According to Baines et al. (1991), the role of care giver has traditionally been unrecognized and undervalued in society. There are costs and consequences to caring that limit women's opportunities. Women, and single working mothers in particular, are more likely to be

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placed in a position where they must be completely responsible for the financial as well as the care giving needs of their children.

The experiences of the women in this study will shed light on how difficult it is to manage the dual parenting and working role without an adequate recognition of the cost of care giving. These women bear the weight of having to earn an income, organize alternate care and live up to a socially constructed ideal of parenting. Despite the lack of recognition, the mothers in the study do find ways to manage.

The use of grounded theory procedures will result in a discussion of the context and subsequent properties of managing, the strategies used to handle managing, and the intervening conditions that give rise to managing.

B) Managing Parental Emotional Well Being

Figure 1

Context Properties	Action/Interaction Strategies	Conditions
Coming to Terms with the Single Parent Role	Reasoning	Recognition of the Importance of Care Giving
Assessing Supports and Alternate Care	Support Building	
	Confidence Building	Availability of a Supportive Network and Quality Child Care

Coming to terms with the parenting role and assessing alternate care and supports contribute to the management of parental emotional well being. Emotional well being is defined as an ideal state where a mother recognizes her situation and attempts to do what is necessary to be both a care giver and a worker. The term suggests a level of contentment and satisfaction can be achieved. There is also an assumption in this definition that emotional well being is within the control of the parent. In actuality, mothers encounter structural and personal conditions that interfere with the achievement of this state. They face structural conditions such as the undervaluing of care giving and varying individual conditions such as their children's specific care needs, their support network and their financial circumstances.

Coming to terms with the single parent role and assessing alternate care and supports were selected as properties because they provide a context for the discussion on action/interactional strategies. They function as conditions within which the action/interactional strategies occur. The properties serve as dominant themes that allow the discussion on strategies to logically unfold.

The section on intervening conditions is placed after the section on action/interaction strategies. Intervening conditions describe the structural conditions that constrain or facilitate action/interaction

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strategies.

Context

Properties

i)Coming to Terms with the Single Parent Role

A mother comes to terms with the single parenting role by developing perceptions and attitudes that allow her to function. The mothers in the study have encountered work, financial, time and social and care giving obstacles when trying to work and single parent. Many adapt by accepting the demands and by using various strategies to manage them.

Single working mothers function in a world where the two parent household is still a normative standard. Whether male or female, a single parent is often faced with maintaining a household where there is no division of labour and where there is often no sharing of the emotional responsibility of caring for children.

Individuals accept the single parent role by finding explanations to understand their reality. Reality reasoning is an ongoing fluid process rather part of a continuum. This construct is presented first in an attempt to establish a context for our discussion on support and confidence building.

Reality reasoning reflects the manner in which a mother justifies and perceives her situation. Thoughts about being resigned to the role can be succeeded by thoughts that are more positive and more beneficial through lessening the emotional impact of managing with single parenthood and alternate care. Ann chooses to think about the positives in her situation.

> Life is pretty simple, we're doing ok here. We're not starving. We are living in a decent place. There are no bugs here, no mice. We're not in a rundown bad life situation. I'm at least able to provide a decent home for them and a decent environment to be in.

ii)Assessing Supports and Alternate Care

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The assessment of the support network determines the nature of the support building process. Human beings, in general, strive to establish and mobilize support networks that can sustain them emotionally and instrumentally. Many mothers learn how to utilize supports in ways that fit their family circumstances. Supports for childcare can be called upon when they require respite or when a child is ill. Mothers also learn who is able to provide understanding, advice and validation. Ann found a way to use supports in order to remain in contact with the adult world.

> I have lots of really good friends, I do have excellent friends that are there for me and we trade babysitting. I have a couple of good friends I can talk to any time of day or night. I have friends all across Canada and friends all over the world that are there for me whether it's emotionally, some financially.

The frequent isolation of single parents requires that they develop support systems that are available, flexible and enduring. Their support systems not only aid them as parents but also as individuals. The often overwhelming responsibility of being a sole parent can limit the utilization of such forms of social support as those involving peers. Further, a lack of support from employers can create predicaments where parents have to make choices between parental and employment obligations.

Assessing alternate care involves the manner in which mothers develop trust and confidence in the caring and schooling of their children. Alternate care is defined as not only licensed and unlicensed daycare but also family member care, sitters and educational programs such as public school. Mothers attempt to determine their level of confidence in those who are entrusted with the care of their children. In the case of family members, shared values and a shared history can generate trust. For a number of parents of children in daycare, a belief in government standards of care and their assessment of the daycare providers is needed to provide assurance. This assurance is not always constant as many parents continue to have doubts about aspects of their child's daily care.

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Diane increased her confidence by observing the interaction between her child and her care giver.

> There are other people, there's other adults in there looking after the other children so (my child) knows that (the daycare worker) is her care giver. Like when I drop her off in the morning (my child) always goes and runs to give (the daycare worker) a hug so (my child) knows also who her main care giver is.

Action/Interaction Strategies

i)Reasoning

Reasoning refers to a process where an individual develops a logical view of reality. It is a thinking process that is acquired by the mother through experience and adaptation. This cognitive construct has implications for the emotional well being of mothers. The mothers in the study were able to use rational and intellectual cognitive attributes to manage their emotional well being. The reasoning process requires that a mother be able rationalize how the single parent role can limit the family socially and financially. A number of mothers learned to accept parental responsibility and the demands associated with the role by believing the demands are a natural part of the role.

When talking about the number of tasks she had to accomplish in the day, Ann described how being overloaded was simply a part of parenting. A parent should not complain about having too much to do: "in life sometimes yes, parenting no because that's a responsibility that you take on once you become a parent. You can't ever say you have too much to do."

Lynn talked about feeling tired on an ongoing basis. She developed a reasoning strategy to describe the inevitability of dealing with the demands. The following is an example of a mother who demonstrates a great deal of self control with regard to expressing feelings of being overwhelmed.

> That's all the time. You just learn to live with it. That's how my life is right now and I accept that, I don't feel sorry for myself, that's just the way things are.

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The thought of being the only adult with responsibility for a child caused Ann and Diane to view their role as more demanding.

Nobody else will have to pay the burden of taking care of my children if I die tomorrow.

Considering I'm a single parent, I'm the only one who she's got, I do feel like I have to be there more for her than probably normal.

When talking about maintaining a social life, Ann accepted that she is very limited because of single parenthood. One of the strategies employed by this mother was to view parenting as a personal choice that requires certain responsibilities.

My choice in life was to have children and they come as a top priority and your social life takes a back seat to everything else. If you get out once a month, you are doing good.

Ann and Sue used reasoning strategies to aid in their understanding of their children's needs. The use of such strategies is effective in helping the mother's adaptation. It can also aid in lessening the emotional impact of care giving demands. Ann talked about how the absence of a father was balanced by the presence of a stepfather. The stepfather remained involved with the child following the separation. Sue considers her child's tendency to ensure that the care giver is nearby to be a part of her personality.

And he misses his dad a lot but the interaction with his stepfather does play the role there as (my son's) dad.

She does a mom check. And she (care provider) says that too, the babysitter says that too that often she's very clingy that she sticks right close to her so I think that's just the way she is.

Ann described how she dealt with the stress of work and family pressure. She learned to view support from work in a realistic fashion. When the support is informal and contrary to the employer's regular practice, she reports feeling grateful.

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I'm sure there is a lot worse places than where I am. That is why I said I wouldn't switch, even for a shorter workweek. I'm very lucky to have such a good support system there. She knows, she's had enough people before who've had children and it's a fact of life. We all get sick. Things happen.

The pressure of taking additional time off from work left Diane resigned to the consequences of working with co-workers who did not understand her situation. Because of family demands being paramount, she accepted negative perceived attitudes.

You just have to go through it and not care what other people think because you're not living their life and you're living your life and you have responsibilities. What am I supposed to do, I can't send her to day care with a fever.

The view of the single parent role as both substandard and stigmatizing was challenged by Lynn. She described how some children from single parent homes are unjustly singled out as having more needs than children from two parent homes.

I prefer single parenting to being two parents where their relationship sucks. I see that a lot and then the kids are more damaged and I don't think that kids that come from single parents have to be singled out, oh they're bad or they're behaving like that because they're from single parent families, I think that's very biased.

The well being of the children is seen as the primary indicator of role satisfaction for Lynn. The excessive demands of the parenting and working role are offset by her perception of the children's health and emotional well being. The need for Lynn to fill two roles is of course difficult but not impossible.

I'm living the fact that I'm a single parent and you need – you have responsibilities that need to be met and your children have to be looked after, that's the priority. After that you do the rest but it's not impossible and it can be fun too. That's encouraging to them because a lot of people are struggling and yes, I'm struggling too but it's mostly financial but other than that my kids are healthy, they're happy, I'm pretty happy most of the time. Actually it's not even happiness, it's just that I enjoy living,

Lynn responded to a question about an ideal work setting for a single parent, by saying none existed as long as she is required to work full time. The time commitment alone would create

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excessive demands. She reasoned that knowing others in similar circumstances has helped her to accept the reality of managing dual roles. Despite excessive work demands, single parents can provide the kind of care children need.

> It's not possible, not if you have to work 40 hours a week whether you get lots of money or a little money. What's worse is if you have to work two jobs just to maintain. I know women that have had to work two jobs when their kids were small and/or go to school and work and yet their kids turned out good, so I don't believe it's just quantity it's also quality but some people just have it and they can do it. They provide the quality care for their kids even though it kills them and they work their bones off, they're just tired but eventually they'll get there, but it takes its toll.

Dealing with a former partner required Ann to suppress feelings and adopt a different attitude for the benefit of the children. By recalling her own childhood, she was able to determine that it is important to maintain a relationship with her former partner's family.

> She (my mother) didn't do a lot of things that I have, especially interaction with the kids and seeing that they see the grandparents on both sides of the family. You don't worry about who they are and that they are affiliated with the X. that's not their problem. That is your problem. You have to get over it.

Reasoning strategies are used by mothers to account for the demands of managing two roles. They find ways to justify the manner in which caring has become a central part of their lives and how it has not only provided them with meaningful relationships but also limited their opportunities vocationally, financially and personally. The mothering imperative and socialization reinforces the expectation of women to be the primary care givers of children. Families are also expected to be economically self sufficient. Due to these expectations, women assume the working and caring role and learn to accept the reality of this role.

ii) Support Building

Support building refers to the mother's need for a supportive network of people who can provide material and psychological resources. A supportive network is considered a basic human

need and is necessary in order for anyone to successfully master their environment. Support can be defined as the extent to which the mother believes she is understood, valued and emotionally sustained (Hobfoll, 1986). It can also mean support around meeting the material and care giving needs of the child. The degree to which a mother feels supported depends on family circumstances, the availability of support and the perceived need for support. The mothers would endeavor to identify situations where support would have been helpful. They would also utilize strategies to acquire support.

Mothers developed supportive networks that allowed them to function as parents and as adults. In order to engage in adult activities, some mothers have established routines or guidelines on how to access such support. This can mean combining children's and adult's activities. Lynn developed a system of childcare where regular outings with other adults were undertaken. She considered it helpful to have peers who also shared the responsibility of being a parent.

> that are all acquaintances, none of them are close friends but they're all good acquaintances and I go and it's just adults sharing – having good times, and I can do that now because I have enough friends that will baby-sit in the neighborhood or my daughter

> Used to do everything with a friend, their kids and my kids and sometimes I will still do that. We have kids times where we take all our kids and we do something with them, but, in the last 5 months we go out one night a week without children just a friend of mine and we go out and we listen to some nice jazz, that's what we do.

The utilization of peer support can require departing from normal peer group behavior in order to accommodate care giving. Angie, who has non-parenting friends, found she had to be firm around the parameters of their contact.

> And there's times when I haven't gone out for a whole month or two and my friends they'll start really pressuring me, 'oh come on you deserve a break and it doesn't hurt to go out' meanwhile I'll have to work the next day or I'll have like an exam coming up and (my child) to spend time with.

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The participation in a women's group was identified as an important source of peer support for Barb and Sue. Sue did shift work and, therefore, the group provided a structured opportunity for daytime peer contact. The groups are also structured to accommodate the parents childcare needs. Another aspect of the groups is that they facilitate a connection with parents in like circumstances. In Barb's case, this connection was so meaningful, it led to ongoing support in later years.

> Wednesday morning I go to Ladies Morning Out at church and they have – it's separated they have a day care there and activities for the Mom's, so we go to that on Wednesdays

> I belonged, when (my son) was a newborn, to "Take a Break" and that was a support group of about 10 stay at home moms at the time, so we've all watched our children grow, although we don't get a chance to see each other very often but we do still phone and keep some contact going.

Peer group support serves the dual purpose of providing access to activities outside of care giving and to opportunities for sharing information about parenting. For some mothers peer contact was not frequent. Some relied on telephone calls or once per month outings. These mothers benefitted from having outings to look forward to and having people they can access. Ann's opportunity for social activities away from her children were limited.

> I don't go out that often on a social level. I'm going out on Saturday for the first time in months.

A key aspect to successful peer contact is the mutual understanding of each other's care giving role. Even though a mother can share an evening of non-child orientated activities with another adult, the latter must have an understanding of the mother's responsibilities. As in the case of Angie, this lack of understanding, evident with her non-parenting peers, required that she clarify the boundaries.

The identification of supports depends on the experience of the mother and her sense of

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shared purpose. Angie met a number of single parents while attending a specialized school program. She remained in contact with them and found she was able to relate to their experiences. Such a support network offers the opportunity to identify with another parent. It also allows mothers to share experiences with others who have children the same age as their own.

> Oh yea, lots of my friends actually just recently had babies and actually my best friend just had a baby December 1st and I went to school with some girls, in high school, that had kids because I went to the Adolescent Parent Centre and met some girls there and some of them have had their second child already and it's pretty tough for them.

Ann and Angie made sure to emphasize that their support network included non-parents.

> I have a few single friends, some of them have children, some don't, some are couples, some aren't,

> I have a lot of friends that have kids but then I have a lot of friends that don't have kids. So there is a balance

Mothers viewed the relationship with care providers and teachers as emotionally supportive. Ann and Diane recognized how they felt comforted when they experienced how the educator and the care provider were able to meet their child's needs.

> I don't know but he's overcome a lot of it and with the help of the school they've been great. I don't know what I would have done without them in the last year. Having the resource help that he's gotten.

> It wasn't there immediately. (the daycare worker), the administrative lady, I knew right away that I would trust her, I could just tell. I don't know what it was, I could just tell and she had a girl there who she had been working with for I don't know 4 or 5 years so she knew her really well but (the daycare worker) was in the room with (my daughter) there for the first while or with (my daughter). It builds up.

Life events were identified by Sue and Ann as influencing their need for support from work. In both cases it involved a death in the family. Sue reported that she was not ready to return to work but nonetheless had to return. This inevitably affected her job performance. Ann accepted

the necessity of returning to work. She faced not only a family death but also the illness of both

herself and her children. She was able to take advantage, however, of family and peer support. In

both cases, these mothers felt compelled to return to work despite family and health concerns.

> I don't know if they totally understood where I was coming from. Just for an example my dad passed away this summer so when I came back to work after the funeral and stuff, I wasn't ready to work yet but I've got to work

> I stayed home two days with (my son) and then I got sick a week after and I was home for two days, then my grandfather passed away and then (my daughter) got sick just a few weeks ago. It was the day after my grandfather passed on so I called her and I said can you come and take her because I couldn't deal with the death issue and everything. Mom kept her for a few days and I have a few single girlfriends who work at home so they will sometimes take the kids when they are sick too which is really a lot to ask of them but you cant stay home all the time when they are sick.

Support in the workplace was seen as situational and practical. Ann saw the support of

customers only extending to a certain point. The customers had their own needs as consumers to

fulfill and, therefore, could not be expected to provide unconditional support. Diane viewed

additional time off during her pregnancy as a positive sign of support.

> Your customers are the ones that depend on you so they are understanding to a point but when you get six days off in one month, you know it's a little much some time.

> I think they have been very understanding with my situation. While I was pregnant they were really good. I was off work a lot while I was pregnant. I think they've done really well.

Support within the workplace was identified as an important factor in feeling recognized

and valued. Ann saw customer satisfaction as an indicator of her significance to the company. The

fact she experienced this recognition on an annual basis was further evidence of her value as an

employee.

> The satisfaction is when the customer comes in and they say thank you. You get that recognition from them. At Christmas time I do very well for my self. A lot of my customers come in and I get boxes of chocolates.

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Ann also viewed support from customers as emotionally sustaining and comforting when family life was stressful. When talking about the demands of both family and work life, Diane was able to identify how workplace relationships could offset these demands.

> I went through a bad time last year and they saw it. They came right up to me and said Hey, you are not your normal happy self. What is wrong with you?" and I told them. And that is understandable they said and they are very supportive. .

> I get job satisfaction with my customers. I deal with a few companies out in B. C. and they're just wonderful. They're just a lot of fun.

The need for support from employers while dealing with the dilemma of caring for an ill child was identified by four mothers. The lack of support can consist of demands by the employer to fulfill a work commitment despite the absence of acceptable childcare. It can also consist of unsupportive comments and perceived attitudes.

Angie reasoned that her capacity to fulfill the work role when her child was sick was related to her employer's inability to understand her predicament. The fact that she earned minimum wage and received no other benefits, influenced her response to the situation. The lack of understanding on the part of the employer reflects an unwillingness to look beyond the work role when dealing with employees.

> If they don't have kids themselves and if they don't have benefits for child care or you know like – they can't say much when your kid is sick

> I had just finished telling her (my employer), one I don't want a stranger coming in with my son, and two, it costs about $25 an hour and I'm getting paid minimum wage. I just don't have funds to pay the nurse in the first place unless the company is willing to pay for it. She was still persistent that if I couldn't get an employee to come in to get the nurse to come in or get somebody to come in basically.

The need for mothers to take more than acceptable amounts of leave from work often results in their perception of being unsupported or the employer's perception that they are lacking

commitment to the job. Ann and Diane felt their employers did not understand how parenting responsibilities can affect work.

> She kinda gives you that look every once in a while but that's because your leaving and they need you.

> There's about 20 other people, so I've heard a few little comments here and there about – some people are really bad at never being at their desk and booking sick and they're relating me to those people now.

Two mothers explained how certain factors influenced the degree of support provided by employers. Ann mentioned the shared experience of mothering. Diane mentioned the company's focus on profit making and centralized decision making.

> She (my employer) does understand that you have a family to take care of. She was a mother, she raised three children and she worked while she raised them. Being that she is a woman, she is very understanding in that respect

> I told them, they could care less, upper management, my supervisor isn't really understanding. His boss I think is really understanding but upper level management couldn't care less about families anywhere. They are totally looking for the dollar and they have bitter employees.

Diane referred to gender balance and management structure as influencing the degree of workplace support. The extent to which women are present in the workplace has an affect on awareness and response to family issues.

> I think they do what they can. If they could have had a day care onsite. I think they would have. But the upper level management is in Toronto and they're just in a different part of the country so they're the ones who make all the decisions.

> The majority of people – there's been a lot of times where I've worked in offices where I'm the only girl or I take a lot of (nonsense) because of that. Women are a minority at (this company) and if there were more women they would understand my situation.

When asked about their support network, a number of mothers emphasized the significance of a family member's support around providing assurance, guidance, understanding and childcare.

Angie indicated that she was able to reach out to family members who lived in another province for emotional support. They were able to place a priority on this contact. Diane left her entire family in another province when she moved to Winnipeg. She found them supportive but felt the distance limited the amount of support they could provide.

> I guess the person I like to talk to about child issues – is my aunt – she lives in Toronto though. But she gives me the best advice. She comes in quite a lot, through the Internet at school, letters and that.

> I'm probably at the extreme end when it comes to support – I got a lot of support from Nova Scotia.

Several parents mentioned boyfriends as supportive in providing childcare. In the case of Barb, her boyfriend's care when her children were sick provided enough reassurance for her to be able to work. This underlines the importance of having a significant other who can provide practical support.

> When they had the chicken pox I worked. I felt guilty but (my boyfriend) was here and I knew they were getting good care and I knew that their wasn't anything I could do except to tell them to not scratch their chicken pox.

All of the mothers talked about family members providing support in various ways. Diane found this can involve child care. " I have a good mom and the grandma. She does a little bit, she doesn't baby-sit very often, she really doesn't but once in a while she'll take one of them for a couple hours here and there. "

Family members were involved with Ellen's family but did not actively offer support. "No. I don't have any family offering to (support us) – emotionally, no I feel I don't get that. If I was getting it, I would say yes, I am getting it, but I feel I'm not."

The availability of a sibling to provide childcare for a number of years provided Barb with assurance about the quality of care. The mother's knowledge of her sister's background and skills

along with her availability, increased feelings of being supported.

> ...schooling, learning, whatever needed to be done, she has learned how to do it. She's (my sister) always been there with me and the kids right from minute one. My dad passed away when she was six so (my sister) has grown up without a dad so she's been able to cope with everything just like my kids are coping.

The need for a supportive network is based on the nature of individual transactions with the environment. Instrumental support around child care is important to all parents but is especially important to single parents. Without another partner to share care giving, mothers are less able to fulfill the working role, perform household duties and engage in adult activities. The lack of instrumental support only increases the emotional burden of care giving.

Mothers require psychological support that reflects the nature of their role as adults, parents and workers. The opportunity to interact with other adults outside the parenting role allows mothers to focus on their own needs.. Having a supportive network of other parents permits them to share a common purpose and experience. As workers, they are emotionally sustained by positive experiences with employers and fellow employees. Working single mothers feel more supported when they are recognized as adults, parents and workers.

iii) Confidence Building

Confidence building in the context of this study, is a process where mothers develop trust in the care giving of others. Mothers have to delegate the care of their children even though the norms of good mothering suggest this care can never be completely delegated (Baines et al, 1998). They develop an awareness and trust in care giving that is based on their need to both ensure quality care and maintain involvement with their children.

Confidence building aids mothers in managing the emotional dilemma of asking others to accept responsibility for the care of their children. The process of building confidence is also based

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on their need to monitor and evaluate the care of others. The mother's interaction with a system of child care, whether it be formal or informal, is an example of how the individual is in transaction with the environment out of necessity.

Confidence building refers to the creation of confidence in the capacity of alternate care giving to meet the emotional, physical and cognitive needs of their child.

A mother develops a level of confidence in different ways. She evaluates the response or potential response of her children to the care giving. She uses strategies to determine whether the care provider is trustworthy. A mother also develops confidence in a care provider based on the provider's adherence to mandated standards. Mothers develop trust in a care giver based on an evolving relationship with that person and come to trust that persons capacity to meet the particular needs of the children.

Lynn found suitable sitters from her oldest child's network of friends. She also monitored the sitters by obtaining feedback from her children. The use of people in the parent's support network to develop confidence is an example of how mothers utilize their resources. Lynn also has school age children as well as a preschooler. The older child's ability to communicate helped decrease the level of vulnerability she felt about the children.

> I screen the babysitters because they have to be people I know. My friends' kids that were old enough. Of course they liked the money and I trusted them, that's important, it's really important to me that people who are looking after my kids are responsible. If ever any of them have screwed up that's the last time they babysat because my kids could talk. I have a good communication with my kids.

Angie developed concerns around the family daycare provider and the quality of her child's care. The practice of "checking up" allowed her to properly appraise the provider.

> I was concerned. How I would check up, is I would phone and ask what he was doing at that time and make sure that he's not sleeping at the time when I set the limit at an hour maximum

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especially when he was at the home day care, the family day care, I found that she was sleeping with the kids and I was waking them all up

Sue, Lynn and Barb formed an assessment of how the care provider shared their values and attitudes regarding parenting. Barb viewed the provider as being able to offer a normative experience for her child.

My sitter is married and so she gets that total correct family and she gets to see the father and interaction with a male. I think that's good, so I like that part too, whereas she wouldn't really get that here, not in the same way anyway.

Lynn had doubts about day cares in general but was able to find a center that shared her philosophy around care giving. She had concerns about a daycare being responsive to her child's emotional needs but was able to address this question after seeing how they related to the child.

I don't like daycare. I have never liked daycare because they raise your children with their thoughts, their morals, their whatever. I'm fortunate because I have a good daycare where the people believe basically what I think in child rearing and they're sensitive to (my child)

Barb described how the contribution of her sister toward care giving allayed her concerns. The extensive use of family care giving was unique to this mother. Confidence was built around not only shared values but also around the sister's capacity to facilitate developmental activities.

And then my sister was in and I paid her. She was really good with the kids, she spoke with them, raised them the way I did which was basically in an adult manner, always testing them, helping them learn.

A number of mothers identified their child's response to alternate care as integral in developing confidence around care giving. When their child gives positive feedback about school or daycare, the parent views the care giving favorably. It also gives them the reassurance that they do not have to intervene with the care giver.

Ann talked about her son in grade school and her daughter in kindergarten and daycare. She

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talks about the peace of mind her children's reaction gave her.

> I think the school is good, the kids are enjoying it. They're happy, that's obviously a good thing, they like the teacher. That's a big thing. They're happy there and if they're happy, their mother's happy.

Diane talked about the process of acclimatizing her two year old daughter to the daycare. She developed a strategy where she could buffer the child's fears of being abandoned.

> I was really impressed with those and I put her in day care where I went with her for a week and a half before I went back to work and I stayed with her. For the first week I stayed with her until she got completely comfortable with the place and I was just there with her for the day, each day and the last two days I left her. I would just leave her there for partial days and I'd work my way up to a full day.

Lynn's confidence in the daycare environment was predicated on her perception of group care. She saw it as pushing her child too quickly through the developmental phases. It also exposed her child to potential health problems and mistreatment.

> They're probably tired of being socialized so long from age 2 to age 18 when normally they have 3 years – they start kindergarten and start slow, they don't have to share, those expectations are not placed on them as soon and in daycare they are, so they have to grow up faster The kid's like 17 and she's only 5, she has an attitude on her that just is really scary and it's subjects them to more diseases, to more kids bad language, to abuses from other children.

Ellen described how her school age child responded favorably to participation in a church activity. She made an assessment of the environment relative to the way he managed in regular school. The learning atmosphere to learn and his positive mood were reassuring.

> Sunday School Catechism classes he enjoys those. He always talks about positive things, he's comfortable there and the students that are in his class seem to be able to communicate with him, he's very comfortable there. I find that he – Church the atmosphere, like the teachers, the students all around, it's just more calmer and he learns better, he catches on faster.The look on his face and how he comes home and that tells you that he's gotten something out of it and it's been a good experience.

Diane resisted using a sitter for her two year old daughter whenever possible. She lacked both

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a regular sitter as well as confidence in her child's ability to manage emotionally with an unknown care giver. She viewed the daycare center worker as preferable because she had developed a relationship with her child.

> If there was an opportunity where people invited me – I don't have a babysitter I can't go, I wish that I could have those people (daycare) look after her in the evening so I could go once in a while because I have a real problem with trust. I would only leave her with somebody that she was really familiar with because I don't want her to not – I'm really afraid of her thinking that I'm going to abandon her or something.

Angie thought that daycare workers have more skills than family daycare workers. She was able to differentiate between the care given by a child care worker and an untrained care giver.

> The only thing I didn't like was private sitters because they are not as cautious of your children it seems like. They are not licenced. They are just an average person, you know, they are babysitters. They are not childcare workers and there is a difference. There is a big difference. These ladies here at this daycare are great. I drop them off, I don't worry about a thing.

Ann expressed concern about children under the age of two years receiving adequate nurturing while in alternate care. This concern was alleviated when her children grew older.

> No nothing really, I've been very lucky. I've never had anything very, very bad happen, the only thing I've ever worried about was when the kids were babies and if they would pick them up when they cried and needed to be picked up.

The presence of standards of care in licensed centers was identified as a source of reassurance for mothers. Required levels of staffing reassured parents of appropriate levels of supervision and safeguarded against abuse.

Diane and Angie, both mothers of two year olds, stressed the importance of standards around the number of staff to children. There is comfort in knowing a care giver is always in position to adequately supervise the children. In comparing daycare centers to family daycares, some parents expressed concern about a family care giver becoming distracted and leaving the children without

proper supervision.

> The homes yes, but you're – you have one caregiver but you also don't have the security, the quality control, whatever you want to call it.

> Supervision and that's why I say the day care centre has a better reputation and it's better for him because you know that they're going to be up, there's somebody always up because they're going to their job and their main focus is the kids and they have one person there looking after all the kids,

Angie raised a concern regarding the high child to staff ratios and how they can have a negative impact on child development.

> I still think that they could use more staff in day care centres. I still think that their legal ratio is a little ridiculous, just like in classrooms they have 40 kids in one classroom I think that's ridiculous for elementary and high school.

Lynn viewed care in the home as better developmentally and emotionally for children. She talks about the disadvantages of group care and echos the feelings of other parents, like Barb, who prefer home based care.

> I find a lot of day cares don't meet the emotional needs of children, or the structure and the boundaries that they need. They let them get away with a lot more because their hands are tied, they can't – I might be stricter about certain things at home than they are and they have a lot of kids so they don't get a lot of one on one whereas at home the kids get that

Diane thought standards at day care centres provided protection with regard to health and cleanliness. This is a care giving issue which she felt needed to be addressed.

> They disinfect the toys every day. I'm just – that built confidence, if I've got to leave her somewhere I would rather have these standards than not.

The standards also instill the belief that the center is upholding its responsibility to keep the mother aware of what happens to the child. The manner in which the daycare informs the mother about the child's behavior was viewed positively by Diane and Ann, who felt the timing of giving such information was important.

If anything happens to her through the day, there is an incident report. I have to sign an incident report

I have never gotten a call to say that they have been bad, they don't call you for that, they discuss that with you after when you come to pick them up and they never discuss it with you in front of the child from childcare center. It's done in a proper fashion.

Ann saw the presence of a number of care givers as a safeguard against abuse. The hesitancy to entrust the care of a child to a single care giver underlines the concern mothers have in delegating care.

You are not there, and that is the only thing, but otherwise, I don't have any worries about them, I know they are well taken care of there. You're not allowed to smack these kids. You can't physically touch them.

Confidence in care giving is enhanced by the quality of communication between the mothers and the care giver. The opportunity of an account of the child's day was considered important by one mother. It gave her a chance to feel a part of the child's day. She also came to believe in the care giver was interested in her child and their understood of what is important to her as a mother.

They have a baby babbler. I have to put down on paper when I get there everything that happened to (my child) from the time that she left day care – just some stuff, what happened to her, her sleep, how it was, what I fed her, when she was last diapered and then they in turn through the day starting to fill out all the stuff that happened to her through the day.

Barb shared her experience of having a strong level of communication with her child's day care staff. Her trust in their care giving ability and her children's attachment to the workers resulted in a lasting connection.

Wonderful, the best. I would drop the kids off at 8 – 8:30, the centre opened at 7:15 so they were always there fully staffed ready to go. If there was a problem, they called me, if the kids weren't feeling well they called me and I'd go get them and I'd be home with the children.

Sometimes we would stay and talk with the staff, there was one lady left and we'd talk to her for 20 – 30 minutes.

Having a key day care worker, a worker who is assigned to the child, was reassuring to

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Diane. The key worker was someone the parent could develop a relationship with and someone she would be able to rely on for information.

> If anything is going on (the daycare worker) is there so she is her caregiver from like 7:30 in the morning until 4 in the afternoon when she goes home.

Angie and Sue recognized how socialization and learning opportunities are available to children in daycare. They acknowledged the need for their child to have contact with other children and to have stimulation. Mothers who felt more assured about daycare believed there are other benefits besides supervision and basic care.

> It's a need that he has to interact during the week with kids too so not just mom but also people his age, he likes to interact with them.

> I don't think it's (private sitter) as structured, it's not structured learning (like the nursery) but yes, I think she works on stuff like that because there's a lot of stuff that was coming home and I'd go, 'where did this come from?' and (private care provider) would say like I teach her how to do certain things and stuff

A mother's level of confidence in care giving is contingent on two main factors. First, she needs options that address a variety of care giving concerns. These involve concerns not only for safety and stimulation but also for meeting the emotional needs of the child. Mothers need access to the kind of care, whether it be relative, group or family care that meets their expectations. Second, the perception of caring as a private responsibility needs to be changed to one of shared responsibility. Shared responsibility can be defined as a shift away from the norms of good mothering and away from the belief that mothers must always be engaged in the mothering role.

Intervening Conditions

The researcher has identified two structural conditions that intervene in the emotional well being of mothers. First, there is the systemic issue of care giving being invisible and undervalued.

Women are supposed to conform to a socially constructed expectation of care giving that does not acknowledge the need to delegate care. Care giving is traditionally seen as natural for women and a private responsibility (Ferguson, 1998). This has led to a child care system that is inadequate and underfunded. Second, women need a supportive network and quality child care in order to overcome low incomes and time limitations. Parents are required to be not only loving but also responsive to the norms of family responsibility and obligation (Baine et al, 1998). As a result, the mothers in the study had a need for supports and assurances that reflected their perceptions of this responsibility.

i)Recognition of the Importance of Care Giving

Women who are care givers experience a reality that influences their need to use reasoning, confidence building and support building strategies. Although there are single parent fathers who share similar circumstances with the mothers in this study, women are mostly likely to be care givers and to be expected to conform to societal norms around mothering (Prentice & Prentice, 1997).

There is a need to recognize the importance of care giving as an intervening condition for managing emotional well being. Because of the mothering imperative, women often have conflicting emotions about delegating the care of their children to others. By doing so, they believe they are not fulfilling their responsibility (Ferguson & Prentice, 1991). Some of the mothers in the study had difficulty in relinquishing care of the their children to others and in finding quality childcare. Diane tried to overcome these difficulties placing her child in a situation with multiple care providers.

> Well, the day care was – I went with this day care because I wanted her in a centre because I wanted to know that she was safe, because I'm really worried about abuse for her and that was my main issue and that's why I put her in a centre where I knew she was going to have more than one caregiver so that she was never alone with one person.

Baines et al (1991) says women have a heavy emotional investment in care giving based on

socially constructed expectations as well as the mothers own sense of obligation. The care giving of

small children involves both "love and labour." The task of providing instrumental and affective care

to children is not adequately acknowledged (Baines et al, 1998). Angie stated it this way:

> You just have to accept that, accept your priorities and being a parent you do accept that. It's not that you can't go out and do things but you have to limit it and you have to balance – so you can still do the same things as your friends, going to a restaurant for dinner or stuff like that

ii)Availability of a Supportive Network and Quality Childcare

The intervening condition influencing the mothers ability to manage her emotional well being

was the presence of adequate material and emotional supports. The presence of these conditions can

buffer the effect of excessive work and care giving demands. The attainment of a supportive network

and quality child care will influence the degree to which reasoning, support building and confidence

building strategies are employed.

Mothers who felt supported and assured had access to childcare resources and emotional

supports. Extended family supports and quality childcare were identified as important. Mothers found

ways to develop a supportive network and to locate suitable childcare. The mothers who were more

able to manage their emotional well being had conformed to single parenthood by developing such

a network. They also became more assured when they used confidence building strategies based on

the ability to locate resources that satisfied concerns regarding the safety and development of their

children.

Reasoning strategies are used in order to aid a mother in coming to terms with limited

resources and the demands of single parenting. A reasoning strategy was required by Ann who

wanted to explain to the children the reality of living in a single parent household. She compared the

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family to other single parent households when describing financial and time limitations.

> I've explained to them that this is where I have to be to make a living and you know that I have to work to pay for groceries and housing and have a car. A lot of single women don't have a car.

An example of the use of positive reasoning strategies is when a mother is able to place the care giving and working role in a certain context. Using such a strategy allows the mother to rationalize living within financial and time constraints. The necessity of working for a living and providing economically for the family was cited by Angie as a reason to accept additional work demands. She was expected to be at work later than her regularly scheduled shift without being compensated.

> No. It's life, I have to pay the bills. If I could stay home with him, I would in a minute. You have to accept that and that's the way it is. That's the way the work load is these days – you have to put in that extra time.

The extent to which support building strategies were employed depended on the availability of supports and the skills of the parent. Family supports could be adjusted to fit the evolving need of the parent for instrumental and emotional support. The relationship with alternate care givers needed to be based on a sense of mutual caring and shared values. The relationship with peers often had to be limited and scrutinized in order to conform to the parent's care giving role.

> A few of them my friends do have children. That way we can all relate together, yea, we sit down and yack about the kids. So and so did this this week and this one's did that, As a single parent family, we rent movies, and we stay home and watch movies. And we'll have people come over here instead so we don't have to pay a sitter to go out.

Support building in the workplace depends on the supportiveness of the employer. This support can take the form of flexibility in work demands or in the mother's perception of being valued and understood. Care giving demands such as a child's illness can result in unsupportive responses from employers. A parent who lacks understanding supervisors and co-workers can

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become both negative and accepting of the lack of support. Some parents felt compelled to address their childcare concerns without assistance. The parents who felt supported by their workplaces were less likely to focus on the dynamics of juggling work and family schedules. Those who did not feel supported by work managed to either fit their childcare needs around the work or were forced to extract more benefits from their employers. Diane felt fortunate when comparing herself to employees who did not have care giving dilemmas.

> I know that management has been very lenient with me, that a lot of people who – if they had not been in the situation that I had been in, taking as much time off, would have probably already been hauled in for an investigation

C) Managing Care Giving

FIGURE 2

Properties	Action/Interaction Strategies	Intervening Condition
Learning about the Obligations and Responsibilities of Care Giving	Knowing/Learning	The Presence of Parenting Demands
Development of Coping and Problem Solving Skills	Learning	
	Coping	
	Adapting	

The following section attempts to portray care giving as a process of meeting the challenges of managing a household and caring for children. The act of care giving involves mental, emotional and physical effort. Care giving, traditionally, is not considered as work but as a voluntary and natural human behavior. The vast majority of primary care givers are women and therefore, the costs of caring are absorbed by them (Baines et al 1998). According to Baines et al (1998), the literature places more weight on the psychological and emotional aspects of caring than on the instrumental and tangible aspects of caring. This section focuses more on the latter aspect of caring.

Meeting the demands of instrumental and tangible aspects of caring, requires the ability to draw from experience and utilize management strategies. Single working mothers attempt to perform a role that is normally shared in the traditional nuclear family. The demands of being a working single parent result in dilemmas over time, energy and financial resources that have to be managed through a process of coping and adaptation.

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The strategies in this section suggest that care giving reflects a learning and a problem solving process. They are presented in a logical sequence but in reality do not occur in this manner. The properties and the conditions of managing have been developed based on the researcher's interpretation of how the strategies evolved. The properties attempt to capture the context of these strategies. The conditions section examines the framework from which the strategies function.

Context

Properties

i)Learning about the Obligations and Responsibilities of Care Giving

One of the properties of managing care is learning about the obligations and responsibilities of care giving. Care giving occurs in a context of not only learning about child rearing practices but also meeting society's expectations for parenting. These expectations often contrast with the kind of resources available to parents.

Inspite of socially constructed expectations of caring that are unrealistic and structural conditions that are unsupportive (Baines et al, 1998), mothers engage in a process of acquiring knowledge, assessing child development needs and living up to the norms of mothering. This is the context within which strategies are carried out.

The task of acquiring knowledge requires that the parent draw upon past experiences to help her in fulfilling the care giving role. Childhood experiences were significant for Ann who found her mother's own single parenthood aided her understanding of care giving.

> Everything in my life is taken care of. I have taken care of every detail. Except for my will, which I have to finish. It's started but I have to finish it but I think that for being a single mother I've accomplished a lot of things that my mother never did when she was a single mother

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Values and attitudes developed from early life experiences influenced the womaen's parenting. Sue thought her child needed to be exposed to a two parent household. Barb and Ellen had positive experiences with church involvement and decided to enroll their children in Sunday school.

The knowledge base of a parent allows her to adjust to the ongoing demands of the role. Parenting is a learning process where past experiences and current dilemmas influence the strategies that are undertaken. Mothers with older children learned about the impact of alternate child care and were more knowledgeable the next time they needed a child care option. Other mothers learned about the impact of childcare. They became aware of the advantages and limitations of such a resource.

The mothers learned how to interpret their children's needs by developing an awareness of their need for stimulation, supervision and parental attention. Opinions were formed about a child's response to play activities, to the daycare setting and to other children. Certain expectations were developed around the level of supervision required at home and in the childcare setting. Finally, from the experience of care giving, a mother learns how much time she should be spending with her child.

The mothers acquired knowledge about the developmental phases of their children. They learned how their children's ages influenced care giving. There was more of an awareness of separation and attachment issues for younger children. The mothers also learned how structure, routine and consistency affected children of different age levels. Ann reflected on the different developmental issues facing children in different age ranges.

> You sure learn a lot between a variance of age of children. From having a five year old to having a stepdaughter that's 12 who is now becoming a lady and wearing a bra and you

know learning how to do the period, it was like you got a really wide range there.

The mothers had to acquire an understanding of the single parent role. They did this by learning how structural conditions affect current tasks and challenges. To understand this role is to understand structural dilemmas having to do with time and financial limitations. They set priorities and learned to live with these kind of constraints by being efficient and economical. Lynn explained how she learned to manage care giving

> It's kind of hard juggling work, your kids, your home, yourself but it can be done. You can't expect a lot from yourself though or you have to be extremely organized so – but it can be done

ii) Development of Coping and Problem Solving Skills

In order to use effective parenting strategies, the mothers developed skills around coping and problem solving. The development of such skills is dependent on the mothers perception of her obligations and responsibilities as well as the availability of resources. The process of determining priorities was characterized by Angie as a process of learning to understand all aspects of the parenting role

> The way I look at it is that being a mom, you have to prioritize and it really depends on what's going on at that time and if you plan ahead for a big event like a concert, if you know a month ahead that concert is coming up, you can always buy tickets for that concert and arrange a baby sitter but you have to always prioritize in your life

The assessment of problem solving skills form the basis for mothers to manage care giving. The knowledge of the mother is applied to the task of raising children. This requires organizational skills capable of responding to a multitude of care giving demands. It also involves the capacity to cope with the competing expectations of work and care giving. The mother learns when to accommodate these demands and expectations and when to alter them.

The use of organizing strategies requires the ability to anticipate and plan for events. It is

a systematic approach to meeting household and care giving expectations. This is where the mother develops strategies, sets goals and establishes priorities. Sue changed residences in order to be eligible for subsidized nursery care. She also planned to alter her work schedule from late night shifts to day shifts when her child reached kindergarten. Diane shopped in bulk in order to cut down on the number of shopping trips.

The ability to manage the demands of single parenting requires coping strategies. This necessitates an understanding of the stressors associated with single parenting. These stressors are managed by identifying what is most important and what it is possible to change. As well, the adoption of a healthier attitude toward the stressor is integral to coping with it. The stressors most generally experienced by parents are financial pressures, inadequate time spent with children and insufficient physical and emotional energy.

The parents in the study developed ways to address problems by either coping with them or adapting to them. Some parents accepted the problem as part of reality and considered it unchangeable. This is often the case when talking about a lack of energy.

> It's not something that I like – I don't like my house dirty but – a lot of times you're just so tired after the end of the day that as long as you can get the laundry done so that she's got something clean to wear and you've got something clean to wear you know you've got the lunches made at the end of the day.

In terms of finding trusted child care or responding to an ill child while at work, most parents were able to be flexible. Angie withdrew her child from a childcare center and scrutinized several others before finding a center that met her expectations. Five of the mothers made demands on their employers regarding time off to care for an ill child.

Structural and systemic issues can interfere with a mothers capacity to use adapting and coping strategies. Lynn learned that earning a higher income meant she had to contribute more

for child care costs. Subsidies in daycare are based on income levels and, therefore, a mother who improves her standard of living is penalized with higher daycare fees.

> I don't get any money for her from anybody but because I get money for the other two they take that. I don't get it really because day care takes that money too.

Action/Interaction Strategies

i)Knowing/Learning

Knowing and learning refers to strategies that the parent used to acquire an understanding of single parenting. The strategy knowing and learning differs from the property learning about the responsibilities and obligations in one important way. The former focuses on individual learning while the latter focuses on learning as part of fulfilling normative expectations. This strategy encompasses the past experiences of the parent and their interpretation their children's needs. The experiences of the parent when they begin the dual role of parenting and working is also part of the learning process. Knowing and learning strategies differ from organizing and adapting strategies in one important way. The latter refers to the application of knowledge whereas the former refers to the acquisition of knowledge.

Angie learned how juggling school and work with parenting affected the time she could spend with her child. The experience taught her about the importance of balancing.

> Well, there was a point where I was working two jobs and going to school for the first three months and then I felt overloaded.... Then there wasn't much time with my son and it was stressful at that time and it didn't last very long with the two jobs and the school, so it was time to sit down and balance everything so that everything could just go a lot smoother and more time for everything else.

The mothers in the study formed attitudes and opinions regarding the needs of their child in a variety of ways. Barb, along with another single mother, determined that exposure to positive

values outside the home was important. They based their decision to attend church on the logic that sending their children to church would provide this exposure.

> We started going to church when (my child) was just about a year old. We thought that it would be good to give them – because we were single parents, my girlfriend and I, all our children we figured needed to go to church to give them stability, things that maybe we couldn't provide so we figured that's as good a place as any to learn something

Prior experience was identified as a determining factor in assessing need. Ann adopted a preference for daycare based on her prior experience of children who had not been in daycare. Ellen acknowledged her lack of experience made her unsure as to how to respond to her child.

> I've seen other children that don't go to daycare, that don't go to school yet, and they don't interact with other children very well because they have never been away from their mothers and they've never been out of the home.

> Well, he does need to be reminded. I mean, he is a typical 9-year old I do see that in him but I also do see that he needs that extra push. I'm finding it – I'm kind of finding it difficult to separate –{ is this a typical 9-year old first child or is it him?} I really pay close attention to recognizing the difference because I say to myself, 'maybe he's just a 9-year old' I've never had a 9-year old before.

Parents develop an understanding of how an event such as separation can affect their child. They rely on knowledge and experience in order to explain it. Diane used her knowledge of her child's cognitive ability along with her belief in the importance of having a familiar care giver to determine how the child could be traumatized.

> I don't think that parents should go out and leave their kids alone for periods of time until they're old enough to understand that they're just going out and they're coming back because when she's one as far as I'm concerned, she doesn't understand that.

Lynn attributed her child's anxiety around separation as due to early daycare attendance. She compared this child with two older children who did not attend daycare. She found the younger child did not handle separation as well.

> She doesn't like – she's very – she's less likely to want me to go out whereas the other

two know I'm going to be back and there's not that much anxiety. There's more anxiety I think and there's more of an emotional thing for kids than socially I think because they have to go to daycare so soon.

The assessment of an alternate care giver is based not only on experience but also on the opinion the mother forms regarding alternate care. Angie thought that licensed daycares needed closer screening because of her belief that many do not provide enough stimulation and supervision.

I always say it's best to go when they don't expect you at a day care because then when you're shopping for a day care because then you see what's really going on in a day care and like for example when I got two weeks notice to get another day care for him

.
The use of knowledge and experience obtained from growing up in a single parented home was identified as important by Ann. This experience can also be used as an indicator of her own accomplishments as a parent.

She (my mother) didn't do a lot of things that I have, especially interaction with the kids and seeing that they see the grandparents on both sides of the family.

Identifying knowing and learning as strategies allows us to view care giving as an acquired skill rather than as a natural and instinctual attribute. Acquiring knowledge and using knowledge requires abilities similar to those used in other roles. It is important to consider care giving as parallel to working in terms of the need for knowledge and learning.

ii) Organizing
Organizing refers to the systematic effort to arrange something into a functioning whole. In this case it specifically refers to the mother who engages in a process of assessing, planning and implementing in order to meet the needs of the children and the household. The processes of organizing suggest that enough time exists to consider a spectrum of issues. Organizing is a pro-

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The effective use of resources is an example of organizing. The ready availability of family members to provide childcare allowed Barb to avoid the common problem of finding suitable and trusting care givers. On the one hand, she was able to treat the family member like an outside care giver by paying her. On the other hand, she relied so heavily on this member that she began to see her as being similar to a parent.

> At that point in time my sister was the only one that was babysitting. When I'd have someone else come in, it was usually an aunt or my mom would baby sit. My sister was being paid to baby sit the kids, so she baby-sat the kids.

Angie was able to arrange her work and school schedule in such a fashion that allowed her to achieve a satisfactory amount of time with her child. The flexibility she had in her work situation permitted such arranging.

> I do right now, because right now everything's pretty much relaxed. I go to school three times a week and I work 9 to 12 hours a week so I have the week end and the evenings with him and a little bit of the day. I feel that it's balanced.

Planning is an important issue for pregnant women. Diane needed to determine the benefits and limitations of using available maternity benefits. She had to weigh her desire to remain home against available financial resources.

> When I was on maternity leave my house was clean. I took an extra two months maternity leave and I stayed off 8 months and I went back and that was a major thing for me. I just wanted to be with her for that whole time.

> I just seemed to have all the time in the world to be – she was younger and she was sleeping a lot more but now that I'm work sometimes I just throw my hands up in the air and I find that very stressful. You learn to live with it.

Diane also found the anticipation of her daughter reaching certain developmental milestones allowed her to plan care giving.

> I can start putting her down more and taking her to places like we're going to the

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Children's Museum on Wednesday night and now I went there once this summer but it wasn't that much fun because she couldn't walk. Now she can walk so I'm looking forward to this.

Maintaining the household requires the management of time and energy. Sue does household duties when she is least likely to be sidetracked by other care giving tasks. In organizing household duties, Lynn involves the child as much as possible. She has also learned to be realistic in terms of standards.

> Yeah, mundane stuff to keep the house going. I find a lot of it I do while she's sleeping. You're running around getting laundry done and whatever or things just completely go by the wayside like they did today.

> I choose not to do them. There are things that I would love to do but I choose not to do them. In terms of household chores, if I don't feel like doing the dishes, I don't. It doesn't bother me that the dishes aren't done. It's my choice.

The organizing of care giving is a process of arranging the most practical way to meet the child's needs while also lessening the demands on the mother. Ann found home based activities and gatherings allowed her to effectively meet the needs of her preschool and school- ged child. She also saw the benefits of involving the older child in teaching the younger child.

> Whether we play a game, or we bake or we watch a movie or friends come over, we do it here. It is more convenient for me because when (my child) is tired she can just go to bed. The older kids can stay up

> He does help her somewhat but she is very advanced, they are very, very different children, very different children, it's amazing. But the younger ones maybe learn from the older ones.

Ann found the task of organizing a household requires a realistic appraisal of financial commitments. She was able to accept the high cost of daycare by acknowledging the cost as a part of care giving. A partial subsidy is seen as a resource.

> With a subsidy they provide it allows me to have a little more pay, but you still have a very tightly restrained budget. I still pay $130.00 a month, which is fair, I don't mind

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paying my fair share. It's based on your income. Or what your situation is.

Daycare can be viewed as providing more benefits than outside it's essential purpose of allowing the parent to work. For this reason, Ann imagined a role for daycare when considering the needs of her children. Daycare can be considered a resource that can augment the parenting role.

> Half-time there and then she's with a whole other group of children in the afternoon in the daycare. If she was at home, no she probably wouldn't get enough interaction with other children. Probably not. Unless she went to a playgroup, maybe two afternoons a week, but no, not if she stayed at home. Then she wouldn't be with other kids all the time to learn to make the friends and have respect for other people.

Diane saw daycare as offering the kind of stimulation that she could not offer at home. In this sense, daycare can be viewed as not only an essential resource, but as a support as well. She also saw how developmental activities at the daycare can compliment activities done at home.

> I like it for social aspects too, while the security is there, but I like the idea that she's in a social environment, she's interacting with the other kids, she's learning how to be social. She doesn't get that at home because it's just her.

> I prefer toys that she can learn with and that's – everything that I bought, I prefer to buy things that she can learn with and that's what they have at the day care. The problem now is to try find things for her that they don't already have there

Even if the necessity of working was not a factor, Lynn sees a worthwhile role for daycare. This is based on her assessment of her child's developmental needs and personality. When organizing care giving, there needs to be a recognition of the importance of balancing the child's need for nurturing and individual attention with her social and learning needs.

> Actually if I could have a perfect situation, let's just say I won the 649 and had all this money, I think I'd probably put her in day care for 4 hours a day, maybe Monday to Friday 4 hours a day or something like that just so that she gets to socialize.

> I think in some cases because she is such a curious child and so active, day care is beneficial to her specifically because of her personality.

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Sue also believed in the role of daycare in her child's development. The daycare setting prepares children for regular school and offers them new learning situations.

> Yes, just get her advanced and ready for school. Open up opportunities for her. To me that's important just to expose your kid to different things

The developmental phase of the child is a major factor in assessing how parenting and childcare resources need to be utilized. Younger children are seen as more labor intensive. They require more input from the mother in meeting their basic and emotional needs. This assessment affected how Lynn used resources such as daycare.

> It can be both – it's sometimes a plus because now they're all less demanding. Three years ago it was horrendous because you'd have a newborn basically or baby, toddler, middle aged and pre-adolescent. You try that on for size, it's horrible, but it was a lot easier than doing three sets of diapers. Some people have a lot of kids under 5 – I couldn't handle that. I'd sooner deal with the pre-adolescent, adolescent and their problems of PMSing whatever, the middle school age child and deal with that because it's just different. You're looking at three separate phases

There is a need to see care giving as requiring skills in organizing. Not doing so minimizes the attributes and energies that are necessary for care giving to occur. The process of organizing is also contextual. Mothers organize according to what is expected of them as mothers. They also organize in the face of realities that require anticipated and planned responses

iii) Coping

The inability to cope suggests a state where the mother is unable to manage an aspect of her environment. Coping is the ability to in someway tolerate a stressor. Successful coping can be considered synonymous with adaptation. The researcher's use of the term coping is more restricted, referring to someone who is able to endure situations but who is likely to experience an eventual consequence such as mental and physical exhaustion. Coping is an attempt to deal with

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and overcome problems and difficulties. Adaptation is different than coping because it implies a more appropriate state. People who adapt are managing while those who cope are surviving.

The mothers in the study found a variety of ways to cope with situations. Many endured situations by simply accepting them. Other mothers found ways to find new supports or to use existing ones. Lynn on the other hand, adopted a "give and take method" when she reduced time pressure by increasing financial pressure in her decision to work fewer hours.

The energy required in managing two roles can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion. Lynn manages by confronting the reality of the situation.

> Oh mostly I have a lot of things to do but I try and write them down and I get the most important stuff done. Do I get extra batteries for myself, I wish. I get tired and miserable and I want to run away lots of times because you have to get up – working full time and being a parent is a killer, it's just a killer.

When the demand of managing dual roles causes exhaustion, the response is often to reassess priorities and come to terms with an overloaded lifestyle. Diane's response is often to confront the situation and to live with it.

> For myself, I go crazy some days. It's like totally – you just do as much as you can and whatever you can't do just gets left and if people can't understand that, that's too bad. My housework just gets left behind. Do the bare minimum, keep your laundry done and get the dishes done, get meals done and after that you're dead. You go to work to rest, it's pretty overwhelming some days.

Sue coped by adjusting her household schedule to allow her the best opportunity to complete tasks. She also assessed her energy level and approached tasks realistically.

> I often do things after work, that's when the laundry gets done. You do one load at a time, it's not like today is laundry day and you do a whole bunch of laundry, it's like you do a load here and there and everywhere kind of thing. You're constantly working. Some days I think, does this never end, especially when it's like laundry days and stuff, when I'm doing laundry, it's like when does this ever end?

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The demands on Sue resulted in her need to find private time away from work and care giving. She also emphasized the importance of being able to function outside the care giving role.

> My time to myself, I stay up really late at night, after 10 o'clock between 10 and 1 is my time to myself, that's when I get my break, that's when I get time to myself

The absence of supports around child care, especially support that family can offer, is a source of stress for Ellen. It underlines the importance of child care resources in terms of people who are available and willing.

> Grandparents – well to put it plain and simple they don't call me and offer, do you need to do this, or do you just want a break and I'll stay them. I've never had that from family members. It's always me that kind of has to say, 'well I've got to do this, could you baby sit' you know and then I don't feel good because I don't know maybe I'm imposing on their family.

In this example, feelings of being overloaded brought a sense of not being in control. The feeling of needing to manage on a day to day basis is how Sue and Diane cope.

> The next morning she'll just go and mess it up again. I try to clean it up before I go to work so that when I come home from work it's not messy because that totally drives me nuts.

> There are some days when I'll just – okay kid let's just feed you as fast as we can. Let's just get the food into you I'm tired and I'll flop down on the couch. I don't have the energy to get down and play with her, that's happened ya.

Her child's reaction to other care givers presented Lynn with issues that made it difficult for her to cope. Fortunately, the stressor was removed by the existence of social services.

> My daughter is having night terrors I need someone to come into the home' because I had babysitters, all my friends all over the city she'd go to different ones and one particular one from the church she just screamed and she'd scream at night and go 'no mommy, mommy, don't leave me mommy' so that just cut to my heart and I just went to the Family Centre because they helped out before.

The difficulty in finding a suitable child care resource is an issue Diane had to cope with. Although she found an acceptable daycare in the area of town where she lived, her inability to find

a day care close to work was a source of stress. The age of the child and her need to see the child during the daytime was a matter she was concerned about.

> I looked at some day care downtown, that I could maybe walk to. I just found that they were so shabby I couldn't even find one that I wanted to be in, that I would put my daughter in or trust my daughter in and that was probably – I also found that there was no parking at these day cares, you were parking on the street. For me to try to find parking down there, haul her into the day care, go back to the car, it's just going to be nothing but a big hassle. There wasn't one proper day care that I saw that would even take her at that point, that was downtown. That was another thing, I had a really hard time finding a day care for her. As long as you were over like 18 months, it's this magical number, then there was day cares galore all over the place but anybody for under 18 months you just forget it.

Time limitations were an issue for most of the single parents in the study. The thought of not being able to spend time with the child is worrisome. It is an issue that Ann and Diane considered beyond their control.

> If I could take them to school and work the normal time that they go to school pick them up after school and have time for the after school activities that a lot of the children get to do instead. You could go to ballet or hockey and you could do more things with them or find things that of course don't cost a lot of money to do. You don't have that opportunity because your time is limited. By the time you get home it is quarter to six and dinner is off the table at seven o'clock. Dinner is done and it is already seven o'clock. We spend two hours less together a day, which is ten a week.

> By Friday when Friday rolls around I've had enough because I don't get to see her at all. I feel like a weekend mother. We just have to live with it, there's nothing we can do about it.

A number of parents had to cope with financial pressures. This is an issue where alternatives are often limited. Lynn found that stress can accumulate after a number of years of financial hardship. The prospect of trading work hours in for more time with the family is also viewed in context. More time with the children would only be possible at the cost of a basic standard of living.

When you have to borrow money for a couple of years just to survive, then it becomes really harsh. Some people would probably go bankrupt but I just insist on just paying, trying to make it because I could easily go bankrupt but I'm not going to.

Ann acquired complimentary passes for recreation activities and sporting events as a way to compensate for a low income.

If you have money it is unfortunately a fact of life. Our recreational activities consist of renting a movie. We go swimming and the only reason that isn't expensive, not even as much is, I got free swimming passes for a year. So we are set. We go because it is free. This hockey game is free from my boss.

Lynn also found financial pressure can be compounded when an increase in income results in a reduction in funding for daycare.

Partially subsidized, that kills me too because I was fully subsidized for a while and now as income went up so did day care so now I'm always behind in payments and I'm not getting ahead at all. That's hurting quite a bit. I used to pay $300 in day care, that's an awful lot of money and I don't have – so I'm behind, it's like $200 a month that I have to pay for her so if I'm behind a little bit on one there goes my fee right up to $300 again and that kills you

If I get a raise day care will take my raise so if they would do something about that where you just pay – make it sort of like a – cap it somewhere.

The identification of coping as a strategy underlines how single working mothers live with insufficient psychological and material resources. Coping is compensatory. Mothers learn to compromise on certain expectations in order to achieve others. They have to overcome individual problems, such as inadequate emotional and physical energy, brought on by structural conditions. These conditions can be defined as insufficient economic and care giving resources and excessive time demands.

iv)Adapting

The Collins Dictionary (1994) defines adaptation as a process of "altering for use under

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new conditions"(p.9). Adaptation is very similar to coping in that both involve a response to an undesirable state. The continuous need to cope can have long term consequences such as physical and emotional exhaustion. Adaptation suggests that the person is in some way managing to overcome the stressor while also maintaining other aspects of herself.

Adaptation refers to the acclimatization that is necessary in order for an individual to respond to change in the environment. This change can occur suddenly or gradually. Subsequently, acclimatization can also be sudden or gradual. The adaptation to change in one aspect of the environment can lead to maladjustment in another part of the environment (Infopedia, 1994). For instance, engaging in the working role can benefit the family financially while also creating problems interpersonally.

Adaptation is necessary when a situation requires a response or strategy. For the single parent, adaptation is essential in order to deal with obstacles that surface when trying to meet the demands of care giving. Ann possessed a willingness to adapt by identifying what was important in overcoming a barrier.

> I want to be one of those mothers who gets to go along on those fieldtrips. She said just book the time at least a month in advance and ok. And I know when our busy times of the month are so I will try to work around that. But I'd like to do that, I've never done that, and I'm willing to take some of my vacation time and go and spend a day with a hole group of grade three kids or kindergartens. It'll be interesting.

The choice of care giving resources is often dependent on the mother's assessment of that resource. This assessment can occur after the resource has been acquired. Her assessment of that resource is based on her perception of appropriate care. In this example, Angie started with a family day care but switched when she perceived that the quality of the care deteriorated. The choice to go to a licenced center was made after scrutinizing the availability of more appropriately

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staffed centers.

There is more interaction with the kids and more attention given to the kids than in a family day care. In the case of my son, he was in a day care where it started off with just her daughter and this other 3-year old and it was okay, but then she got more kids in and ended up with she had so many kids in the day care and they weren't getting outside, they weren't doing as much activities as what they should have been doing so I decided to switch him to a day care centre where he would get activities, painting, drawing and singing and going outside and all those activities, so by the end of the day he can be fulfilled.

In this example, the choice of a child care resource was based on its flexibility with regard to child illness. Sue found that family day cares could offer such flexibility.

Well I haven't had to come home from work where she hasn't – the other thing is at a licensed day care, if the kid's throwing up they're not going to take them, if they're sick they're not going to take them. Where a private baby sitter she can be sick and I'll still take her there and that way I've gone to work with my kid sick. I've got her to the babysitters and said, 'my kid's sick do you want her, can you still take her?.

The cost of child care resulted in Sue's move to another area of the city. The decision to relocate reflects a strong willingness to adapt to child care needs.

All other school divisions you have to pay for it, so that's why. If I had to pay for it I wouldn't send her to nursery because I have to pay a babysitter and nursery, it gets too expensive, so it's like because it's free I'll send her to nursery and then the sitter. I actually moved out of River East I believe it was into Winnipeg 1 so that she would – first of all so I'd be close to the sitter and second of all because of free nursery because they couldn't cross register at the time when I moved.

In adapting to the arrival of another child, Lynn relied on both family and agency supports in order to manage working and parenting. Adapting to the circumstances was aided by her capacity to specify how the support was needed. Having prior experience working with child care services made it easier for her to identify services and negotiate with them. The refusal to leave the workforce in order to address the problem also shaped how Lynn adapted.

I don't care if they're babies – actually you know what it's really neat, when I had that

little kid I had help from Family Centre, they sent me a homemaker, when I came from the hospital because I couldn't move.

I said, I don't need protection, I don't need to know child development, I don't need that stuff, what I need is someone to come and physically help me maintain my home.

The demand of single parenting often involves a need for child care that is situational and available on short notice. In the case of Barb and Angie, having relatives and friends who could fill a specific child care function was helpful in their adaptation to the role. However, both examples illustrate how such supports are not available over the long term.

My brother lives around the corner just behind me. My other brother lives in Winnipeg, he just moved there in the past three months but he's has always been around for the kids if I needed a baby sitter for 20 minutes – ½ hour where I needed to do something, he would more often than not come and watch the kids.

7:30 til 5:30 basically I was working til 6 on Tuesday and I had to find somebody to pick him up from day care and watch him for ½ hour and I was fortunate that a good friend of mine that I've known since way back was just across the street from that day care but he's not going to that day care any more and she got a job herself and she's going to school. Everybody else goes on and does their thing so you can't really rely on people that – babysitters change over time, their life changes so their priorities change

The need for child care when her child was ill, meant that Ann needed to employ as many resources as possible.

My mother-in-law, my x mother- in- law has been very good. If the children are sick, she will come and take care of them so I can go to work. Because my X, he works too and you see we just went through a bout of the flu in November.

Adapting work to meet care giving needs depends on flexibility in the job and on the nature of the need. Angie was able to alter her hours of work due to the loss of evening child care. Ellen needed understanding from her employer around her child's medical needs in order to continue working for him. When unable to do so, she had to leave the job.

I think it would be more relaxed because when I was working the Tuesdays from 10 to 6 and Thursdays 10 to 4 and then 5 to 9, I had him in a day care where they had day and

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evening care so it was no problem but when the evening care was taken off that was my problem,

If you can't understand that these children – my child needs to see a doctor for her disability, I don't want to work for you

Adjusting the home to fit the needs of both the mother and child requires a number of adaptive skills. A mother needs to realistically appraise the kind of lifestyle she can offer her children. In the case of older children, a mother needs to combine the teaching of responsibility with meeting the needs of the household. That is, she asks the children to contribute at an age appropriate level. Lynn found ways to conserve emotional and physical energy by not becoming distracted by the work and by teaching the children to not make excessive demands.

Ann was able to see the overall picture and realized that she had achieved a balance in meeting her children's social and physical needs. She realized that some desirable activities could not be undertaken.

In life yea, it's a little bit difficult, juggling a work schedule, a kid schedules, their doctor's appointments, dentist, this that and the other, Christmas concerts. My kids are not in sports.If they were then it would be worse. I don't think I could juggle the schedule of taking one to hockey, one to ballet and that kind of stuff too. That would be very difficult. For the most part we are pretty balanced.

Lynn assessed a problem with household management and determined that her children possessed the capability to help her overcome the problem. Although this situation resembles coping, it does differ in that she has found a solution that should reduce her strain and help her children.

And they all have expectations because we all have something to do because this is a unit, a working unit. You know what happens is if mom's sick they have to do it all themselves and I was at the point I can't do it anymore I'm going to just quit, so I just sat down and said, 'okay guys, I just can't do it, you all have to pitch in or I am just going to throw my hands and just leave it and leave everything,

Although Sue appears resigned to not completing her housework, she has determined that her own self care is a priority. Adjusting ones expectations in favor of another area such as the self, is a reflection of adaptation.

> Just do what I enjoy to do and that's why housework gets left behind too because it's like that's not important at the time – my time to unwind is more important than working some more and keeping my house immaculate. To me that's not important.

Ann talked about the strategies she used in aiding her family to live within a very limited budget. They needed to accept their lifestyle by appreciating other alternatives. The family also had to find ways to maximize finances. This involved acquiring complimentary admissions and ignoring the budget at times in order to allow the children to participate in special activities.

> We are very lucky not to be having to be bussing everywhere and taking cabs and those types of things so that's an important thing and they know it.

> My son and I went to wrestling a few months a go because we got freebies through work. Every where we go, most of the time it is because of a freebie or whatever. For three of us to go out and have dinner, just to go to Wendys or McDonald's is a treat and that's a once a month thing.

Diane found working and caring for a two year old meant that time is a very valuable commodity. The instrumental tasks of parenting combined with the high care needs of a two- year old contributed to high demands. She wanted to avoid taking her child with her to complete household tasks.

In adapting to such time constraints, Diane found ways to use all available resources. The use of free time at work was one way she carried out errands. The use of vacation time was another way. She also learned how to do grocery shopping in a manner that reduced the amount of shopping she had to do.

Diane adapted by deciding to separate care giving and household management tasks. This

was done at the expense of using work rest time and vacation time.

> I'll go grocery shopping or I'll do whatever on my lunch break so that I don't have to take her with me or I refuse to grocery shop in the evening on weekdays, that just out. You just have to be organized. You do things, like you buy in bulk, you buy a larger quantity so that you shop less so that it takes less of your time because time becomes very valuable.

> I took today off and I put her in day care and I just was running around Christmas shopping and getting everything done, buying the tree and you name it, so that now I have the rest of the week with her and I don't have to be hauling her through shopping malls so or whatever,

Adaptation underlines how single working parents manage despite having inadequate resources. Mothers become innovative around finding care giving resources when they lack a suitable one. They learn how to adapt to insufficient finances. Adaptation is a dynamic process of balancing individual and family needs against structural obstacles.

Intervening Conditions

The intervening condition for managing care giving is the presence of parenting demands. The demands of parenting can be external and can include issues around normative expectations, economic needs, social and care giving supports and time availability. The normative expectation of mothering does not account for the lack of adequate resources in meeting the obligations and responsibilities associated with the role (Baines et al, 1998). Single working mothers need adequate paying jobs and compensation for care giving as well as quality child care in order to fulfill this mothering role. The demands within the family involve managing with limited parental emotional and physical energy and meeting the particular needs of the children.

The Presence of Parenting Demands

Mothers respond to the presence of demands with learning, organizing, coping and

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adapting strategies. The demands of care giving encompass both affective and physical care for individuals who would otherwise be vulnerable. These demands are compounded by the requirement to organize and delegate care. They are compounded by the often conflicting expectation of meeting both the family's care giving and economic needs.

The degree to which these strategies are used depends on the acquisition of a number of skills. First, information is acquired around parenting and child development. Mothers attempt to conserve personal resources by learning to both cope with stress and practice self care. Problem solving skills are developed in order to respond to the obligations and responsibilities of parenting.

The normative expectation of a mother is that she provide quality care all of the time(Ferguson, 1998). Diane found the responsibility of maintaining the household conflicted with her ability to provide such care. It also conflicted with her ability to meet some of her own basic needs.

> Get the stuff done, ya. I did not stop today, honest to God, I haven't even eaten. It was just go, go go, to get everything done. I probably, if I had paced myself, I could have done like today and tomorrow and then – I don't want to haul her around – it's not fair to her and I would rather just spend quality time with her and that's that.

Learning strategies allow mothers to respond more effectively to care giving demands. The learning experience permitted Ann to manage more effectively with limited financial resources.

> We don't normally go out to get hair cuts, we do them at home. So we've figured out the way to do all of these things cheaper. So you go there, you knit, you do whatever it takes and you figure it out. I've even gone to one of these places where you can exchange too small clothes for the ones you need.

When organizing care giving and coping with problems, parents learn how to use resources Mothers who had access to certain supports were able to utilize them as material and

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care giving supports. In the case of Lynn, when her youngest child was an infant, was able to

count on a supportive network for material support. Presently, she can rely on her older daughter

for child care.

> My youngest one, well what do I need – we've been pretty fortunate in that a lot of things
> have been provided for us because that one I just started right from scratch again and
> people have been very kind and very helpful and friends, family, churches, they've all
> helped in terms of providing for her physical clothes and things when she was a baby

> So I've had my friends and now my daughter, my oldest daughter is excellent at
> babysitting. She's got good people that want her now but she's very trustworthy so I
> leave her in charge when I go and she gets paid every month. Everybody has to do chores
> but she gets paid because she baby-sits for me

Assessing the children's needs and subsequently, attempting to meet those needs is not

always realistic. In the case of Ann, envisioning meeting her children's needs meant being

available to them during certain times of the day. This was clearly not a realistic option.

> I would like to work fewer hours, yeah! because I would like to be there for my kids right
> after school because that's when they just want to talk to you. I like to be there after
> school, I like to be there for them in the mornings. I'd like to be there at lunch time but I
> can't so yeah, if I could afford to, I'd work very little just to be there with them, just to
> hear them, to talk to them and to have communication happening so they could grow into
> healthy productive adults.

The strategy of adaptation necessitates that a mother find ways to manage with limited

time and energy. Tiredness often became an accepted state. Those who felt overwhelmed by the

demands used coping and self care strategies. Some mothers learned to prioritize and to adjust

their standards.

> I can feel things, the tension in the back, that kind of stuff, it's there and it's okay but it'll
> pass. Then I just sort of not do a lot, I do not overload myself then, I'll take time out, I'll
> push aside the chores I feel should really be done but they can wait. I'm not going to die,
> nobody's going to fall apart if they don't get done.

The mothers in the study felt the weight of managing with numerous responsibilities and inadequate resources. They responded to the demands by using personal attributes around learning, organizing and adapting. Structural conditions intervene in their ability to use these strategies.

Experience aided the mothers in managing their resources. Angie found that working at two jobs and attending school did not leave her enough time with her child. She found the process of trying out one schedule, then modifying it, a healthy one. Others learned from experience that they needed to alter their expectations in order to cope effectively. They learned how to live with lower household standards and to practice self care.

The demands of parenting heighten the need to use learning and organizing strategies. The mothers who had confidence in their ability to assess their child's needs and to determine resources were more able to avoid situations where they needed to cope and adapt. When Angie realized her child was not receiving enough stimulation and supervision at daycare, she used this realization to find a more appropriate option.

Mothers assess how work expectations and energy levels affect care giving. A realistic appraisal of demands and resources allows them to undertake strategies to address limitations and to maximize benefits. Ellen considered the times when her daughter was sleeping as her private time. Several mothers reported using a strategy where they did not think about work when they were with their children. Although Ann realized she could not be home when her children arrived home from school, she made sure the evening involved quality activities.

The capacity to organize care giving and household management allows parents to deal effectively with the demands of working and parenting. The demands are often compounded by

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limited financial resources. For instance, the following two mothers attempted to provide their children with a structured routine and consistency. Ann found that by having gatherings in her home with other adults and children, she could save on the cost of an outing and also maintain routine. Angie decided to not work evenings because she realized how this disrupted her child's routine. Several mothers at one point left the workforce or adjusted their working hours to accommodate care giving demands.

Mothers who used adaptive and coping strategies were more able to meet demands. The mothers who saw stressors as an understandable part of the role and sought ways to modify their environment, were able to use these strategies more effectively. They used a combination of acceptance and motivation to accomplish this goal.

The mothers attempted to adapt by using external and personal resources. They generally looked for resources in the workplace, community and within their support network. They also found ways to adapt to situations, such as child illness, and to the evolving needs of their children. Even with a number of strong external resources, mothers like Lynn often felt emotionally and physically depleted.

> I know I'm stressed because I feel it physically, but, it will get better again. To me this too shall pass in time, it will get better financially, emotionally, physically, it'll all come together, you don't give up.

D) Managing Work

FIGURE 3

Context Properties	Action/Interaction Strategies	Intervening Condition
Developing a Working Parent Identity	Career Obtaining	Accommodation of the Working Parent
Responding to Workplace Demands	Career Maintaining	
	Negotiating	
	Demanding	

The working role in this study is viewed as being closely linked to the parenting role. This role, whether it entails career selection or scheduling hours, requires an awareness of parenting responsibilities. The mothers in this study considered family issues as driving many of their career and work decisions. Sue, for instance, planned shifts in order to enhance her availability to her child.

> If I should go to days, then my seniority goes down right away and then I'd have a couple hours off in between which lengthens the time that I'm away from home. Then you'd have to get a babysitter before school and after school and on days I would see her less than I see her now on nights so that's what I've always tried to do is to work a shift where I can see her as many hours as possible.

The strategies in this section reflect the interrelationship between work and family. From choosing a career or a job to demanding flexibility from employers, family responsibilities play an integral role in the work lives of mothers. The strategies are presented in a logical sequence but in reality do not occur in this manner.

The properties and the conditions of managing work have been developed based on the researcher's interpretation of how the strategies evolved. The properties attempt to capture the context of these strategies. The condition section attempts to provide a framework from which the

strategies function.

Context

Properties

i)Developing a Working Mother Identity

Developing a working mother identity is one property of managing the working role. This property is characterized by assessing the importance of work as it relates to care giving and the personal needs of the parent. Ann saw her versatility as an asset and her dependence on employment as a liability.

> I'm a very versatile person in that I can work in about six different departments in the company. So in that respect you are a valued employee because you have been in the company that long and you are long term and you're loyal and they don't worry about you and that you are going to get to work every day. They also on the other hand hold that string. They know that you need your job because you're a single mother.

The identity of the mother as an employed person is shaped by an individual desire to meet needs that are not sufficiently met within the family. These needs can be viewed as economic, emotional, cognitive and social in nature. There is often a drive to achieve in a role outside the parenting role.

Developing the working role can enhance personal self worth by complimenting aspects of the parenting role. It is an opportunity to learn and apply skills to a broader context. Skill development strengthens individual confidence in one's ability to support a family and be accepted by the community. Skill development can be viewed as a commodity that can be exchanged for resources that benefit the family.

The working role can serve as an outlet in meeting certain emotional needs. Luster et al (1991) says the workplace provides structure, routine and social opportunities that are not always

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available in the home. The working role can also enhance feelings of security by acting as an economic safeguard for the family.

The identity of the working mother is also influenced by her perception of family needs. These perceptions can influence how the parent assimilates the working role. Expectant women or mothers with children under two years of age may develop a different work identity than the mother of an older child. Such a parent may see work as a structural and emotional obstacle when their children are that young. They may consider the work role as costing them time and energy as well as depleting them emotionally.

ii)Learning to respond to workplace demands

Managing workplace demands is another property in managing work. There is a process of assessing these demands. From this process emerge strategies for responding to the demands or coping with them. Barb responded to a family daytime commitment by counting on her employers understanding.

> If I had said to my boss or the office manager that I have to go home, the children were hurt at school, there would never be a problem

The assessment of work demands often changes as care giving responsibilities change. The mother who once had more than enough physical and emotional energy to function on the job must now consider how to ration this energy. Although she once could manage the work hours, she now must cope with finding care giving for her sick child.

One aspect of assessing work demands is determining whether the workplace is compatible with the working mother role. Some mothers choose to leave the workplace or work in entry level positions while their children are quite young. Others become attracted to occupations that not only utilize their skills but also fit their care giving requirements. This selection of a

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compatible occupation is contrasted by situations where a mother has become established with an employer prior to the arrival of her child. She often faces the prospect of either working under conditions that are not conducive to family life or sacrificing salary, benefits and seniority.

Relationships formed in the workplace affect how working mothers respond to demands. Some arrive at a mutual understanding with their employers. The employer is able to convey to the mother an appreciation for the dilemma of balancing two roles. They arrive at a reciprocal arrangement that benefits both sides. The employer provides flexibility around time off when a child is sick. The parent in turn, displays loyalty to the employer and attempts to compensate him/her by making up the time or ensuring that duties are done.

The relationships between the employer and worker are often limited by company policies and workplace reality. Policies are in place to ensure that the business runs effectively and that all employees are treated equitably. Providing flexibility to workers based on their family circumstances is often viewed as unfair by non-parenting workers. Some employers view such flexibility as an unsound business practice.

The strategies used to alter the workplace are dependent on two factors. First, the parent evaluates her position in the company in relation to skill level, job satisfaction and employer supportiveness. The evaluation of position will determine the kind of effort she makes to alter working conditions. Second, the mother assesses the workplace to ascertain what adaptations are possible. In terms of altering work hours, consideration is given to flexing and banking time and delegating tasks. Work benefits such as sick leave, vacation time and lunch breaks are also considered. There is a need to determine whether the workplace is conducive to alteration Some workplaces are more rigid than others in terms of scheduling and providing customer service.

When there is conflict between care giving and work demands, mothers face a situation where they have to decide whether to exact changes or find ways to cope with the conflict. This decision is based on the nature of the care giving demand. In the case of child illness, many demand time off rather than find alternate care because the demand leaves them with no acceptable alternatives. In terms of energy depletion, the mother will often try to compensate by accepting lower household standards and by not thinking about work at home.

Action/Interaction Strategies

i)Career Obtaining

Career obtaining emerges from the data as a process of experiencing, assessing and choosing employment. It addresses the question of why we need to work. Career obtaining in this study refers not only to the pursuit of a professional or technical career but also to the pursuit of stable wage employment. The mother reflects on the reasons she needs to work and how work fits into her personal and family life. This process can occur in sequence or can occur simultaneously. Finding work that is rewarding and suits the personality is a reason for choosing a career and is also a goal for the future. As well, care giving responsibilities play a role in how a career is chosen.

Ann found that pregnancy and the timing of the pregnancy affected her decision to leave a job that was both financially and personally rewarding.

> And then I tried a job where I was selling real-estate, so I was home with him a lot more, and then she came along, rather accidentally and during that period of time, and it is not a good idea, to be with child and selling real-estate. Not at all, you are on your feet constantly. It was terrible. It was just bad timing. That job would have been okay but then you are out every night showing, every weekend.

Finding personal fulfillment was a factor in Barb's choice of workplaces. Personal fulfillment can be found by simply doing a productive activity. In addition to her work, she found

volunteer work rewarding

> Volunteer, I volunteered at the court house in my town from March of 96 through to June of 96, I did one day a week assisting different things that the court house needs done and at that point in time they just set up a volunteer program. I had done teaching with Sunday school, did that for 5 years. I took facilitator training with the Manitoba Health home care program, I was always out looking to volunteer or do something.

Ellen determined that the financial need to work was superceded by her desire to learn and to obtain new skills.

> Probably money is almost near the bottom. Going to work is more than just getting the money to me, I want to enjoy the job, I want to learn from it, I want to grow from it. I want to get a higher income but that's not the first thing on my list.

The choice of employment is influenced by experience and by understanding how work fits with personal attributes and needs. Diane found that work conformed to her personality.

> I can encourage people. I like my job, that's the bonus, I really, really like it and that's all I know. I know how to do it, I've done it forever, I like it a lot, it suits me, it suits my temperament, it suits my needs.

The need to work is often determined by the desire to have structure and routine in daily life. Sue learned what work had to offer her personally.

> I just had a week's holiday and I was really glad to go back to work. I need stability in my life, I need routine and it gives me that. It gives me a very definite routine because we are not allowed to be late, you have to be there and it's a good job

The decision to leave the workforce is often based on the needs of the family at a particular stage. The extraordinary care giving demands of a child determined Ann's capacity to remain in the workforce. At the time she was in a relationship and, therefore, had the option of staying home.

> I did stay home for the first year of her life, I was able to stay home with her, I was very lucky, with my son, I went back to work when he was three months old. He's been in daycare ever since he was a baby.

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Career and vocational choice is based on individual circumstances. Skills, opportunity and family responsibilities affected the choices of mothers. Parenthood plays a role in the vocational selection of single working mothers by limiting their options.

While the choice to work is based on the normative expectation to work and economic need, the mothers in the study felt valued as workers. The working role not only allows them to live above the poverty line, it provides them with an identity.

ii) Career Maintaining

Career maintaining involves assessing the current workplace reality. The mothers in the study engaged in a process of determining how the workplace affects them as people and as parents. An appraisal of the attitudes of others in the workplace, and an attempt to influence these attitudes, follows. There is also an evaluation of how much time and energy is required to fulfill the role of a working parent.

How a mother has established herself in a position affects her ability to gain the understanding of others regarding her needs as a parent. In this example, Diane believed her employers should have been aware of her needs as one of the few women and one of the only pregnant employees in her department.

> I've been here for two years. They know my situation. I was like the customer service rep that – we have 580 people on that floor and I was the first customer service rep to be pregnant in there. It's mainly men, I work with mainly men so everybody on the floor knew my situation

Mothers' appraise their value to the employer by considering how family responsibilities affect their work. This appraisal allowed Angie to feel more confident about asserting herself.

> I guess they could find a reason to fire anybody because really if the company was – they can fire you with no reason. They can fire you for no reason but why would they want to

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do that, they trained you, spent the money on training you and you're good at sales.

Parenting responsibilities can have an effect on the attitudes of co-workers, which in turn influences how some mothers view their position with the employer. The interdependency of work/ roles created pressure for Diane.

> The people at work, my co-workers, I've heard a couple little comments here and there about my being off all the time because if they don't have somebody to fill my job, if they can't get somebody in on overtime then the people have to cover my unit. There's about 20 other people.

Mothers assess the mental and emotional demands of working. For Sue, the workplace provided a form of escape. For Ann, the physical and mental demands of work suited her disposition. Work demands can also be minimized to the point where it is easier for the mother to view work more positively. Angie, for example, did not think about her job at home.

> I sometimes will be driving and my mind will just wander. I will be driving on a street and I will not remember what streets I took to get there. I don't find the job mentally taxing. I don't think about the job when I get home.

Sue did not find her job mentally taxing. Angie also found her mind was not preoccupied with work related matters.

> Not so much my job, no, because I'm not that serious about my job that I have right now but it sounds bad but it's true because my priority is my son and when I'm at home I don't think about (the product) .

Ann and Diane identified the number of working hours as being a major source of dissatisfaction. The requirements of their employers as well as financial need can dictate the number of hours worked, to the detriment of time with family.

> If I could work shorter hours, even if I could work a six- hour day instead. So that I wouldn't be so rushed in the morning. I have to drop my kids off at 8, that is what time they are supposed to be at day care. By the time you get home it is quarter to six and dinner is off the table at seven o'clock. Dinner is done and it is already seven o'clock. We spend two hours less together a day, which is ten a week.

Oh definitely, these things I can't do anything about. I'm working 9 hour days right now. I would give anything not to work 9 hour days but we lost our arbitration with the union and company, there's nothing that we can do about it and work doesn't seem to understand. .

Angie evaluated how working hours had an impact on her child's routine. She found shift work to be too disruptive to her child and so discontinued it.

Evening work and shift work, and just the idea of today and the child care it's stressful switching back and forth because you're switching the child's routine at a young age and it's just – you're flexible as a person but your child isn't flexible and you have to make sure that your child is flexible.

Time limitations create the need to appraise the work role realistically. The difficulty in fulfilling both this and the family role can be overwhelming. In both of these examples work is viewed in context with family commitments. Lynn is able to adapt work as well as family life to meet her own abilities.

I find I'm very tired lately and very stressed because it's not enough money even with 40 hours a week, it's not enough time and not enough sleep but then I just go whatever – things will keep – nothing will run away. Do it tomorrow.

I already have to spend my time with three children and myself and my job and still try to have a social life which for years you don't – when they're little you just don't unless you don't spend time with your kids – something falls behind.

Career maintaining is a process where working mothers determine how the parenting role is received in the workplace. They find positive and negatives in the workplace. Some see themselves as having to overcome obstacles and find acceptance simply because they are parents. The burden of finding acceptance is an added strain on them as workers.

iii)Negotiating

Negotiating is a process where a mother is able to modify the workplace. Conditions in the workplace such as relationships with cohorts, working hours and duties influence how well a parent is able to affect change. Skill level and financial considerations influence the process as well. Mothers evaluate what kind of change is necessary, and whether a better employment option exists elsewhere.

Negotiation can occur both formally and informally. Formally, it takes place through personnel policies and collective bargaining agreements. Informally, mothers arrange work by developing a mutual understanding with their employers. This a process where she also learns to accept and live within certain workplace limits.

Sue viewed a formal procedure designed to solicit feedback within her company as not addressing her needs as a working mother. She found that once issues were identified, there was no further action. The lack of action on identified concerns only reinforced her belief that the employer did not understand her needs.

> First of all it took me six weeks after the crisis to get into work, but the crisis is over, I don't need it right now, stuff like that. Rather than finding out what's really bothering you and they say they listen to your side but they don't do anything about it. We have big things where there's public relations courses that we've taken and stuff and the last day you get to talk to the higher ups and voice some of your concerns and stuff and some of my concerns – I told them what my concerns were and they're going 'okay we'll change this'. Well to this day it hasn't changed.

Ann and Barb believed they shared a mutual understanding between themselves and their employers. This permitted them to modify their working hours to accommodate care giving. A mutual understanding can occur over time and can result from a reciprocal relationship between the worker and the employer. The worker also perceives the employer as having the experience necessary to understand the parenting role.

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We are good friends, and I'm very loyal to him. You see he realizes and sees that when I'm sick I really feel bad.

I would say my supervisor has been totally understanding about the time that I've been taking off. I'll phone up and I'll book sick, first thing in the morning and he has two young kids of his own so he knows exactly what I'm going through.

The nature of the workplace factors into whether or not a parent can modify working hours. Lynn saw the benefits in having a union contract. She also saw how her employer recognized the demands of being a care giver of three children.

I think I am covered by a union contract so I'm allowed certain things and they're great that way, they allow for that. I have not had any problems, I just let them know this is what I have to do, my daughter needs to go do this and I can do that and they're fine. They're very supportive, that's one thing I like about this place they're very supportive, because there's not a lot of single moms working full time with 3 kids in that place, I don't think, but they are very supportive.

Salary structure and work scheduling can influence the modification of working hours. Ann found that being paid a salary rather than earning a wage gave her more flexibility. She was able to offset the need to take time off from work with a commitment to taking work home and working on weekends.

It's hard and thank goodness I am a salaried employee and I don't get docked pay, because if I wasn't an hourly person I don't know how we'd have got through Christmas for all the time I've missed the last while. In the last year I have probably taken maybe two weeks off between the children being sick, myself and I've had major dental work done this year that I've taken half days for. I've had my front tooth pulled, three on this side, three on the other side and that was hours and hours worth of appointments. And I was paid for all of my time. I'm very, very fortunate. I thank my lucky stars every day.

The lack of scheduling flexibility in the workplace was cited by Angie as an obstacle to allowing her to adjust working hours. Not having alternate staffing can eliminate the option of leaving the workplace to respond to a family matter.

They should have more back-up staff too. My store is basically, the store – they only

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have one person at a time in the store and you're in charge of the store running so basically they maybe should be able to get a back-up or I think if you're a mom or single dad the best work environment for you is a place like, in retail, would be a place where there is Wal-Mart of Super-Valu where there is a lot of people,

Flexibility in being able to rearrange work hours depends on staff coverage issues and company business objectives. In Angie's case, a request for time off needed to be coordinated with other staff requests. Customer service considerations were also a factor in whether Ann could adjust her day by working flexed hours.

> You can if it is prearranged. She is open to that sort of thing as long as you don't come in that day and say I need the afternoon off because I got to do yada yada whatever. Prearrangement is at least a week notice.

The opportunity to work extra hours and to bank those hours was seen as helpful by Lynn. The option to take time off when necessary was an added benefit. The following statement is an example of how a job can offer a great deal of flexibility.

> I work 8:30 to 4:30 and then I work – we're in a group and that's another 3 hours out one night a week but the hours are really cool because if I need to go in late I can and if I work, overtime those three hours on a Thursday night, I can save them up and if I need to take a morning off to take the child to the doctor, I can do that. They're really flexible and I can take – I have enough sick time banked up because I haven't been sick for a long time, if I need time, they'll give it to me.

The options around rearranging work hours are often limited when a mother's child is ill. The use of personal sick time and vacation days was necessary in this case. Even though Diane had earned this benefit, vacation days, she did not have complete discretion around when to use them. Sick child days were helpful, but were not sufficient in meeting her needs

> When she's sick, ya I've had to use my vacation. Now, they're making me take my vacation right now because they won't let me take it at Christmas and since she's been so sick I didn't want to take it until the end of the year and they won't let me take it at the end of the year

> I got 6 days and I can use them either when I'm sick or when she's sick, I don't have to

be sick, and we were told that. Well she had them all, I went back to work at the beginning of August and I used them up and I used two weeks vacation.

A number of mothers identified specific care giving needs as a factor in how they arranged work hours. The age of the child plays a significant role. Ann found her child's hospitalization required use of vacation days. Barb did not want to work later in the day because of her children's ages and their need for supervision and attention.

> We've been pretty lucky, this is the worst year I've had. Since I've gone back to work after my daughter was born. The first six months when I went back to work, she was about a year old, I was probably off two days at home with her, even more so because she was in and out of the hospital again and I had a lot of things happening with her.

> There was talk about my changing my hours again. I didn't like that and I told the office manager that I wasn't really prepared to do that. They wanted 8:30 to 4:30 with an hour lunch and I don't like that, that still puts me in after 5 – by the time I put supper on the table it would be too late. I don't mind starting earlier but later I just don't want to do that because the kids are still young, they want to do activities, have friends over and stuff, there just won't be enough time in the evening.

Sue is a shift worker and planned to alter her working hours to daytime. She planned to arrange to work a different shift when her child reaches school age.

> It goes according to seniority, right now seniority I've always worked evenings and that can change. Next year when she goes to school in the morning I'll change my shift to accommodate her and with seniority I can pretty well pick and choose the hours I want to work.

The employment status of a working mother can affect how she negotiates suitable working hours. Angie worked in a minimum wage position without benefits and was able to dictate working hours that conformed to her childcare requirements. The low wage, the lack of benefits and her value to the company put her in a better position to negotiate suitable working hours. Barb managed to accumulate more time in the summer because of a previously negotiated arrangement. Although she did take advantage of the extra time off, she was able to accommodate the

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employer's need by switching to full time.

Nine hours to 12 hours because I had to cut back on hours of work because the day care wasn't available til 6 – the mall closes at 6 downtown and the day care closed at 6 so I took until 5:30 so that I'd be able to get down to the day care so basically my boss said, you know we need somebody that can stay til 6 so it was just a matter of ½ hour so I said, okay, so basically they split the shift in two – somebody comes in from 2 to 6 into the store.

I was still classified as 4 days a week but again I worked days to have the additional week off for holidays so I could spend 3 weeks home with the children instead of 2 and that was great. We did nothing for 3 weeks and as I understand it now, management was not happy that I was away for 3 weeks because it was just too much for them to handle me being away because a lot of staff was away and they basically counted on me to be there for other lawyers but they approved it, they had to go with it.

Many working mothers adapt to the workplace by assessing and planning around their careers. They also adapt to their current workplace reality. They assess and evaluate whether a job change will benefit their family over the long term in terms of salary and working hours. The working mother also determines whether she is satisfied in the position and whether her skills are most suited to that workplace.

Ann saw the possibilities of advancement and a higher salary in her current job. Diane was secure and comfortable with her employer and also saw opportunities for advancement. She was reluctant to consider changing employers for that reason.

In another five years, I stand a chance at sit in his chair and make the kind of money he's making and that is where we are going. We've talked about it. There's been possibilities of moving into something like a management position or a sales position with a clientele built up already. .

It would depend on who the employer is. They'd have to be very secure, very comfortable, without that comfort level and security it does not matter how much money you are going to give me extra, it wouldn't be the same for doing less work. If the security isn't there or the comfort level, I don't think I'd want to work. I am very secure where I am and they are comfortable and I'm very happy there. I think being happy at what you do is very important in life.

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The process of developing a career can involve both assessing personal skills and the job market. Ann saw the benefits of being in a established trade. She also saw how changing employers can affect her position in the company.

> So many people are stuck in jobs they hate and they don't excel at anything because they hate it. This is what I went to high school for, I learned printing as a trade. I spent three years in high school learning this. This is my field. It's like being a doctor, once you get there, that's what you are going to do. You might move from print shop to print shop, because you have a different boss here, and you have a different boss over here, but they are all kinda like the same.

The accumulation of benefits along with increases in salary can make it more advantageous for working mothers to remain with a company until retirement. Diane believed her salary and benefits would be hard to duplicate elsewhere.

> You can spend the rest of your life with the company. As long as you're in the right office, you could. I could retire there, as long as I go where they want me to.

Angie expressed frustration over not being compensated for her skills and work because of being classified as part time. She also did not envision working toward a better position due to the company being unsupportive.

> It's frustrating when somebody else is getting paid more than you but you're doing all the work, that's mind boggling. More skills than another worker but paid less because you are not available.

Barb could negotiate a specific kind of work arrangement that accommodated her family. Such a position of strength is uncommon for most workers. However, her skills were both marketable and transferable.

> I was always very clear in the beginning with them around what I wanted. When I was first taken on, I said, 'I want part-time work now until all my children are in school then I'll move on to full time, if that will work for you' as it came down when all the children were in school that's when I will be taken on full time.

The economic aspect of working influences how working arrangements are determined. In

some instances, financial considerations are the primary reason for working. In such cases some mothers must weigh the benefits of working against the needs of the family and the costs of childcare. While work was seen as essential for the mothers in the study, working part time was sometimes considered an option. Ann considered her daycare subsidy to be a critical factor in being able to manage financially. Diane chose to work fewer hours at the expense of accumulating debt.

> For a single parent with children it's really a decent wage and we can live comfortably off that with the subsidized daycare. If it wasn't for that I wouldn't be able to work because the actual cost of being able to keep them in day care a month is over 600 dollars a month.

> For a long time, up until this year, I did work part-time. I worked full time but I only worked 20 to 30 hours a week because I wanted to be there when they were sick, I wanted to be there when they had stuff happening and to me that was more important than making lots of money. What it did to me was just put me in a very bad financial situation where I'm still at, but, it was worth it because I was there for them.

> The need to negotiate in the workplace and to adapt to conditions is a logical

consequence

for people who fill incompatible roles. The working role is often not compatible with the parenting role because of the traditional separation of work and family life. The result is workers who have to engage in a process they would not otherwise have to engage in if they were not parenting.

iv)Demanding

> The workplace creates demands and pressures on working parents that require adaptive responses. The competing demands of care giving and working creates situations where parents must either exert pressure on employers or conform to these demands. Unlike negotiation, which entails the mother and employers reaching a mutual agreement that benefits both sides, the process of demanding suggests a form of conflict.

> Diane described how her employer is trying to force a different hourly schedule on

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employees. The fact that the company is reducing their support when it is most needed is very frustrating.

> I figure it's not going to happen til this summer but now they're trying to go for split shifts, company wants split shifts. There's no way I can do split shifts, I've got a child in day care. They want to go for part time shifts now, so they don't have to pay benefits. When I go on strike here the next month or two or whatever that's what I'm going to be fighting for. If I'm going to be working this job I want the benefits to along with it, I've got a child. You're going to make me work 9 hours a day five days a week, you'd better give me the benefits, you've given to me already, don't take them away.

Mothers often deal with the demands of working by not thinking about the job at home. This separation can occur when they feels overwhelmed by work and inadequately supported by her employers. One could argue that the mental separation from work costs the employer. By not thinking about work and refusing to allow the demands of work to spill over into family life, Diane can recuperate. The emotional demands of Lynn's workplace necessitated the need for her to disengage from work while at home.

> The only time that I would ever come home thinking of work was if there is a shut down or something where you've got something that you could do (unclear) I don't get paid enough to bring my work home. It takes away 9 hours out of my day and I'm sure not going to give them any more than that.

> No, if I come home even if I had no children, over the years I have learnt that in order to survive you have to shut work off, that job can kill you just because it's very depressing.

The matter of child illness is a major source of conflict between employers and mothers. The problem occurs without warning and requires immediate absence from work. The options for alternate care are often nonexistent. The support from the employer is also limited by their focus on the requirements of the workplace. The problem often creates a dilemma for mothers who under normal circumstances are able to fulfill the work role.

> In the following two examples, mothers had to address what consequences their absence

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was causing the company. In both cases, the mothers accepted responsibility for the problem by attempting to resolve it. Angie had to maintain her stance and remain with her child even though the problem was not solved. Ann addressed the problem by delegating her duties but still felt uneasy about leaving work.

> When I'm at home I think of spending time with my son and when he's sick, like today he was sick and I was supposed to work and I called in my district manager and I told her that he was sick and was unable to work

> I got a call from the school saying my son was sick, I just hung up the phone and said I'd be there in half an hour I cleaned my desk off, I went to my boss, I said my son is sick, I got to go and that was it. When they call and your children are sick you go and you have to go and you guys will just have to do without me for a couple of hours.

The use of sick benefits as a response to the problem of child illness created a number of issues for mothers. In the first example, Sue thought about using her own sick benefits in order to care for her child. By being honest and absorbing the cost of her absence, she felt unfairly singled out.

> No, you phone in – when I phoned in I'm sitting there thinking, do I lie and say I'm sick because they're not going to hassle me if I say I'm sick, or do I tell them the truth and say 'I need to stay home with my daughter because she's sick?' so I decided to tell them the truth and they're like, 'well can't you have somebody come in and take care of her?'

Sue also expressed bitterness about being subjected to a disciplinary process for an issue that was beyond her control. Her experience is a good example of how formal company policies and informal support can seem contradictory.

> They seem very two-faced about it too. When I go into the office with my daughter they treat her really good, but then when it comes down to my being and kid's sick and I need to stay home with her, then if I would do that too often I'd get called up on attendance review.

The use of sick leave for the care of an ill child can place pressure on a mother with regard to safeguarding her own health. Diane could use sick benefits for her child but felt fortunate

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that she herself did not need to use them.

> I've said to my boss that she's sick, what am I supposed to do. I either have to use a holiday day or a sick day, so they haven't questioned me on it because I've just said, I need to take a sick day and like I said, they've been pretty good but in some places.

The care giving role and the working role frequently come in conflict in terms of working hours. The following example illustrates how normative standards and the reduction in benefits can influence perceptions of working hours. Diane described how her departments working hours were longer than other departments in the company. She tried to arrive at a partial solution that did not cost the company time but was refused because it was inequitable.

> I would be so happy if they'd go back to the 8-hour day. I'd be tickled pink. I'd take an 8-hour day at this point. Every other office in (the company) has an 8-hour day except for mine.

The needs of the child also influence the perception of working hours. Ellen's child has a disability and requires frequent medical appointments. Without the support of her employers on this issue, she could not remain employed in the position.

> I think the employer should be understanding because if they don't then it's not going to work because my children come first. If you can't understand that these children – my child needs to see a doctor for her disability, I don't want to work for you. I gave the best I could and I give what I can.

Changing work hours affected how Diane viewed her status in the workplace. In the following example, the company's plans to restructure working hours raised not only concerns around child care but also raised questions about the company's true motives. On one hand, she felt secure in having protection against a layoff by having seniority. On the other hand, this benefit does not protect her from the restructuring of her working hours.

> I've got 10 years so I don't think that (layoffs) would apply to me but who knows what they've got in mind. They could do that to probably anybody, that's actually one of the reasons why they move people across the country is so that they can get people to quit

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and they could use this.

The sense of responsibility a mother has around job duties can affect how she views the changing of work hours. It underlines the relationship and obligation that working parents have in regards to their workplaces. In this case, Ann believed that altering work hours to meet family demands could jeopardize business relationships.

> (When your child is sick) you just have to stay home from work. And it is hard because I'm a salaried employee and I don't get docked wages but it's not just that. I have a job to do. I have people who count on me every single day to do my work.

The need for single working mothers to demand concessions in the workplace illustrates how one role can be compromised by another role. Single working mothers find they may have to mislead their employers or justify not fulfilling employer expectations. Demanding forces them to alter their commitment to the organization or compensate it in some other fashion.

Intervening Condition

Managing work involves managing the relationship between workplace demands and care giving demands. Single working mothers essentially have two jobs. Their job as care givers is hidden work and therefore not readily acknowledged or compensated (Ferguson, 1998). Conflict occurs when the obligations and responsibilities of one role (or job) clashes with the other. The expectation to fulfill two roles is seen as a structural condition bearing on the action/interaction strategies

i)Accommodation of the Working Parent

The intervening condition for managing work was the parents' perception of being accommodated in the workplace. The process of managing work requires evaluative and adaptive responses to the demands that work has on the parenting role. The parent evaluates herself as a

working parent and also assesses how the workplace is able to oblige her in this role. The degree to which this accommodation takes place influences the extent to which the parent must utilize her resources or learn to cope. In the following example, Angie placed her care giving demands ahead of her obligation to the company. She also made it clear what her priorities were.

> I'm sorry but there's no way that I can come down (to work) because I'm waiting for the doctor to get down to see my son and that's a priority, you're going to have to close the store then because our district manager went out of town.

The parents who saw the workplace as supportive and personally rewarding managed more effectively. A number of parents found their perceptions of support and job satisfaction fluctuated around the nature of care giving demands. The parents who could achieve support in the form of understanding from their employers were more able to deal with rigid working conditions. This was true in Barb's case when her employer allowed her to "bend the rules."

Ann managed more effectively by adopting a positive attitude about her work. She saw a positive attitude as necessary as necessary in order for to find fulfillment at work.

> I don't want to think about work like that because as soon as you get into that rut of I hate my work, you will never like it and you will never enjoy it and the eight hours will seem like 20 hours to you. It will, it will seem like an eternity that you are stuck there and your mind still be somewhere else and it is not on what you are doing. And if you are focused on your work you do a better job

The mother's assessment of her position with the employer was influenced by work skill level and status. These issues affected how confident she felt in making demands for such things as time off. Having a certain skill level allows her to feel secure about being in the appropriate workplace. It also provides her with a sense of being marketable and not dependent on the employer. Status with the employer refers to loyalty and seniority. Having status also increased feelings of security and enhanced the confidence necessary to express needs.

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The parent who worked under rigid working conditions felt heightened tension when their care giving demands increased. Although they understood how the workplace operates, they felt frustrated by not being able to find their own solutions. This was particularly the case for those who wanted to take time off or use holiday and personal sick time to care for an ill child. They also considered how working conditions such as scheduling and coverage brought them into conflict with other employees. The demands to the parent appeared more pronounced when they not only had to care for an ill child, but also had to deal with both the disapproval of coworkers and the loss of income and benefits.

Employers are influenced and pressured to accommodate care giving situations when the parent is not only a needed employee but is also aware of parameters in the workplace. On the one hand, Angie, the parent who refused to go to work when her child was sick, relied on being a valued employee when considering whether she could be dismissed for not reporting to work. On the other hand, Lynn found she could bank time and use it for such situations.

Understanding workplace demands allows the parent to work toward modifying them. Some parents learn that they can gain control over demands by, for example, building loyalty and value with the company. This strategy enables the parent to adopt a "give and take" approach. Ann, for instance, made sure her employer was aware of the extra time she put into her work.

> I don't just take it home, do it, and bring it back, because, you know what, that's pointless. Because no one knows you did it. If you don't point out to someone that you've done extra, they don't see it, because they're not looking for it. So I've found that you have to tell them.

Understanding workplace demands also allows the parent to choose the kind of work situation that is more accommodating. Barb found an employer who offered flexible working hours and the option of working part time.

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Some parents learn to weigh the costs and benefits associated with the workplace. Using necessity, along with experience and judgement, they find out what is negotiable and what is not negotiable. For instance, when banking time and flexing the day is not possible, the use of personal sick time and holidays days may be possible. At the same time, parents learn when they can make demands on their employer. They discover what is an acceptable demand and what is not. Leaving the workplace when your child is ill can be considered an acceptable demand while taking a day off because of stress is not acceptable.

Managing work requires an ability to understand the opportunities and limitations of the workplace. Working mothers have to possess the capacity to adapt on an ongoing basis. There is a need to establish their value with the employer in order to reach reciprocal arrangements. Barb was fortunate to work for an employer who was not rigid and who allowed her to work around her family commitments.

> I wouldn't be there. I've always, when I've worked in my jobs as a legal, I've always had the flexibility. My first job that I had as a legal, I shouldn't say first job, one of the jobs I had when I first had children I had to be off with my son when he was sick for an entire week, he was 5 – 6 months old, my boss gave me a whole week off. I did have to make up the time but I didn't make up all the time, he says, 'oh 3 days is enough' so again because I do things for the company, not on a personal level, but for the company so it's very flexible and if I wasn't' able to have these little bonuses or perks I wouldn't stay.

The mothers in this study used a variety of methods to fulfill a working and caring role. Employers, who demonstrated an understanding of their situation and who offered flexibility in work arrangements, were viewed as most supportive. The presence of formalized benefits were also seen as supportive. However, such benefits did not always conform to the unique needs of the parent.

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Chapter V

Work/Family Role Integration

Context	Action/ Interaction Strategies	Intervening Condition
Property Defining the Personal and the Structural	Skill Development	Supportive Workplaces and Progressive Social Policies
	Establishing a Supportive Workplace	
	Expanding Responsibility for Child Care	

Work-family role integration is the main theme of this study. Integration occurs when the strategies used by mothers and the structural obstacles they face are to brought together in a discussion. The term integration suggests there is a movement toward greater efficiency in a system.

Abrams (1983) says people obtain their identity through their position in a given situation of life circumstances and in transaction with given forces. They are transacting with the environment and establishing the self within a transactional field. The researcher saw the mothers in the study as establishing an identity as people who must overcome numerous demands and limited resources. Integration suggests there can be greater adaption in other systems to accommodate adaptation for the parent.

The following discussion is based on an attempt to systematically relate integration to the categories of managing parental emotional well being, care giving and working. Material from the literature is also used in order to enhance the discussion of structural factors. The study deviates from the intended purpose of selective coding by allowing the use of literature to influence the data. However, the researcher believes such an approach is necessary in order to

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illuminate the discussion. Without the use of the literature, the discussion on employers'

implementing policies and benefits would be limited to the perceptions of the participants.

In conceptualizing the integration process, it is important to imagine the employer who is

interested in being supportive and the single parent who is faced with managing both roles. An

examination of the nature of care giving and the role of women as care givers is necessary. As

well, the manner in which employers have traditionally disregarded the family needs of employees

will be compared with a recent trend toward making workplaces more supportive.

The employer considers the mandate and mission of the organization along with the

needs of the single parent employee and the other employees. Policies and benefits, in the long run,

do not compromise the organization's profitability and its effectiveness. Such policies and benefits

need to be designed so that they are fair and equitable to all employees. In order to achieve

integration, the working single parent should be developing skills and utilizing resources. A

supportive workplace is only one part of a picture that includes the capacity to cope with stressors,

solve problems and access supports.

This study has attempted to address two questions. It has explored with working mothers

the nature of the care giving role by determining their needs. The study has also sought to ascertain

how a workplace can be adapted to support them in this role. The workplace can influence the

integration of working and care giving by complimenting existing parenting skills and resources.

Using the literature and the experience of the parents, the following section will also examine how

the single parent role can be supported by government as well as organizations. Because employers

were not interviewed for the study, it is necessary to use the literature to construct a hypothetical

perspective of the supportive workplace.

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The discussion of a supportive workplace will also include a discussion of the skills and resources required by the parent to successfully integrate roles. In doing so, a more complete portrayal will emerge of the enmeshment of care giving and working. The adaptable parent who has access to a supportive network at home will be able to use a supportive workplace to augment role integration.

The researcher recognizes that his interpretation of integration is defined by personal and structural factors. The parents in this study face inordinate demands when trying to manage working and parenting. While most learn to cope and adapt, the management of these roles would be easier if disparities in income and opportunity did not exist for working mothers as a whole (Lero & Brockman, 1993). The following discussion of integration should be considered in this context.

Context

Property

Defining the Personal and the Structural

The dominant theme in integrating work/family roles is the placement of the personal and structural aspects of a problem in their proper perspective. Mullaly (1993) says understanding the structural reasons for private troubles allows the individual to normalize rather personalize the problem. Normalization is defined as the capacity to see a situation or problem as not unique and that others in the same social grouping also experience the same problem. It can help people who feel they are devalued because of a problem they are experiencing.

The mothers in the study inevitably personalized problems. They accepted responsibility for the care of their children and, subsequently, the problems and dilemmas related to their care.

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When they could not personally solve their problems, some of the mothers identified issues such as inadequate childcare funding, poor quality childcare and unsupportive workplaces. This is a reflection of how the individual sees only how she relates to the environment. The outcome of structural change in the environment is a transformation in how the individual views herself.

A discussion of the personal and the structural conforms to an eco-systemic view of a person transacting with her environment The perspective does not discount the personal aspect by focusing exclusively on the environment. On the other hand, it is an approach that does not automatically assume pathology and deviance on the part of someone who is experiencing a problem (Mullaly, 1993). Differentiating between the personal and structural also fits within the eco-systemic perspective regarding problem solving. The person who engages in problem solving is doing so within a particular set of social realities (Abrams, 1983).

In examining the integration of roles it is expectant to view the attributes of the mother and the structural obstacles in isolation. This differentiation is not always easy. An individual could use vocational skills and dedication to solicit support from an employer regarding family responsibilities. As well, an individual can use social skills to build a support network that provides free child care. However, since child care is not only a meaningful pursuit but also a form of work, there is a financial, emotional and physical cost.

The personal dimension can be defined as the capacity of a parent to preserve personal resources and adapt to circumstances. One way to preserve personal resources is to practice self care; another way is to adopt a pragmatic attitude toward the role. Ann adapts by regarding the demands as a consequence of her decision to have children.

> Um, in life sometimes yes, parenting no because that's a responsibility that you take on once you become a parent. You can't ever say you have too much to do. You never have

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too much, they are the reason you have it. If you didn't want the responsibility, you shouldn't have children and that has always been my philosophy.

The mothers in the study responded to the demands of working and parenting by acquiring skills in coping and adaptation. This requires an understanding of personal limitations and assets and an ability to determine their child's needs and requires access to resources. Finally, they adapt to circumstances by thinking strategically. Doing so requires the use of experience and foresight as well as the willingness to meet the challenge of overcoming obstacles.

The ability to develop and access resources is another part of the personal dimension. Some mothers are able to nurture and maintain a supportive network of family and friends who can offer childcare, understanding, validation and a social outlet. Such support is available when needed the most. Such support accommodates the type of demands associated with single parenting.

The care of children is generally considered a private responsibility. This is reflected in the pressure on single working mothers to carry out the two roles of care giver and breadwinner. When caring is viewed as important work for society and not simply natural and necessary for women, it can be viewed in structural terms (Baines et al. 1998). Women face personal and financial hardship in finding alternate care arrangements that meet the supervision and developmental needs of their children. The mothers in the study would have benefitted from a childcare system that is adequately funded and offered flexible child care arrangements .

Supports in the workplace are seen as part of the structural dimension. Although a number of the mothers in the study used their personal skills and resources to find employment that was compatible with their care giving needs, the matter of family responsive workplaces should be

considered as structural. Working parents often have to rely on a benevolent employer or rigidly interpreted collective bargaining agreements for support.

Structural change on the part of organizations is necessary in order for them to retain employees and remain competitive. The longstanding organizational culture that regards family issues as solely the employee's problem needs to be replaced (Paris, 1990) (Galinsky & Stein, 1990) . As one of the few women and the only expectant mother in her department, Diane saw her uniqueness and visibility as a reason for being recognized as a parent.

> I've been here for two years. They know my situation. I was the first person in my department to be pregnant in there.

Life on a low income is a structural consequence for many single mothers who combine work and care giving roles (Lero & Brockmann, 1991). Although government programs exist to provide support to low income families, they are based on financial need and not on the value of caring. These programs do help parents but continue to reinforce the personal aspect of poverty among single working parents. However, Lynn is a single mother who works providing professional support to other single mothers. Government programs that offer financial and care giving support are available and can be considered a resource for single mothers. She has her knowledge of government programs has helped her in her situation.

> You know what it is, I think people don't know. There are services out there but people aren't aware of the services, they are not aware of the resources that are out there for them. When I make it known to people that there are these resources, they usually will look into them and they go, 'wow, I didn't know'

The dilemma arising from social programs directed toward assisting groups such as single mothers is that they single them out as being in need and not for their role as care givers. Such programs are income or means tested and therefore residual in nature. Lynn describes two residual

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programs, Child Related Income Support (CRISP) and Shelter Allowance for Family Renters (SAFFR) . Although they are helpful to low income families, they are stigmatizing in the way they determine eligibility.

> It's just because people don't know so what I do is make it known to them and I think people have – you know single moms can get CRISP, child related income supplement program, and if you're not making enough money they help you with rent, (SAFFR)

The structural dimension pertains to the existence of informal and formal workplace supports and supportive social policies. In contrast, the personal dimension involves the intellectual, emotional and physical capacities of the mother. The task of parenting and working requires the use of intellectual, physical and emotional energy to manage the integration of roles. The presence of a supportive workplace and supportive social policies influences the extent to which this energy must be utilized.

Action/Interaction Strategies

i) Skill Development

According to Lero (1994), work/family stress is multidimensional and reflects a complex interplay among work related stressors, family stressors and supports and the availability of community-based support services. Managing the demands of work and family life requires a combination of skills and resources. In this study we define skill acquisition as the capacity of the parent to manage the demands of a dual role while maintaining his/ her well being. Resources are those supports that allow the parent to accomplish this task.

A discussion regarding strengthening the self in the face of excessive demands may seem contradictory to our discussion of structural dilemmas. In other words, if the focus is on helping a mother overcome these demands by developing coping and adapting skills, there should be less

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need for resources such as workplace policies and benefits and more affordable and flexible child care. A discussion of personal skills and coping capacities allows us to determine the extent to which working parents do manage without structural supports. By understanding the strategies they use to meet demands, we can shed light on the kinds of supports that would most benefit from.

When considering individual functioning, according to the eco-systemic perspective, low level functioning is not viewed as the result of psychopathology or personal deficits but the result of deficits in problem solving (Abrams, 1983). These deficits occur when a parent occupies a role where there are insufficient resources.

The difficulty in resolving work and family dilemmas is exacerbated by the fact that caring is undervalued and invisible. Although the responsibility of being both a care giver and a breadwinner results in demands that can be managed, it also results in mothers assuming an inordinate amount of the financial and psychological cost of raising children.

Diane is a mother who found work and care giving demands to be incompatible. She wanted to practice self care by going to a fitness centre during her lunch hour, but found this time had to be used for household errands.

> I like to go to the gym on my lunch break.. I'm running around usually to the grocery store to grab bread or grab this or grab that so that I don't have to do it after I get home with her so that frees up all the time with her

The responsibility of working, managing a household and providing emotional care to a two year old meant Diane had little time for activities most people take for granted. It is an example of the inordinate cost single working mothers assume in performing dual roles. The norms of good mothering and the incompatibility of the roles results in situations where no matter how

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adaptive and efficient a parent becomes, they are never able to "free up enough time" for their children or themselves.

The researcher argues that acceptance of the single parent role entails acceptance of a dual role and not an endorsement of an antiquated workplace or inadequate childcare. His definition of integration includes not only supportive workplaces and adequate daycare but also individual skills in assertiveness and self care. The mothers in the study who accepted the responsibility of being a working parent and were able to determine their strengths and limitations, could better access and utilize resources.

All of the mothers in the study thought of ways the workplace could be changed to benefit family life. Most of them were realistic about the demands of the working role and were not looking for an inequitable arrangement. They were, in essence, wanting to find ways to balance the logistics of parenting and working while also preserving their emotional and physical health.

An assumption of the eco-systems problem solving perspective is that all human beings possess innate adaptive and coping abilities (Meyer, 1988). Human beings and other organisms are engaged in a natural struggle toward adaptation. The key to human adaptation is being able to establish a clear understanding of the problem. There is a need for the clarification and expression of emotions associated with the problem. Finally, the individual or the collective identifies possible ways to solve the problem (Abram, 1983).

The parenting and the working role can be considered by nature to be incompatible and, therefore, detrimental to the role occupant. The two roles are incompatible because they introduce competing demands of time, energy and involvement (Parker and Hall, 1992). Given this assumption, we must conclude that accommodations must be made for the role occupant. In the

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workplace, parents need autonomy and flexibility in order to enable them to solve problems (Galinsky and Stein, 1990). In their personal lives, parents require instrumental support to offset time and task demands. They need emotional support to sustain themselves as individuals. They also need informational support around care giving (Cochran, 1993). Ann believed care giving means she has to suppress her own emotional needs for the benefit of the children.

> You take a back seat some of the time on your own emotional level. You have to hide your feelings if you are upset, I don't ever cry in front of my children.

It is important for single working parents to take advantage of supports and to utilize certain skills. This involves being able to make use of available informational, instrumental and emotional supports. It also involves a number of individual attributes such as the ability to learn from experience. Confidence in taking initiatives and trust in one's own skills are also valuable attributes. The ability to challenge maladaptive attitudes is important. Murdock (1983) says, for example, that a single working parent who believes she must have the same household and parenting standards as her mother, may have difficulty solving certain problems.

The adaptation to single parenting requires learning ways to function in such a role. The competing demand of working and parenting necessitates the need for parents to manage under stress. Functioning in the role involves not only the capacity to be practical and efficient with regard to living conditions and budgetary constraints, but also the ability to be a support to children who live under these conditions. Ann saw herself as a buffer for her children against the reality of living on a low income.

> I want them to be comfortable and not afraid. There is no need to be afraid. Life is pretty simple, we're doing ok here. We're not starving. We are living in a decent place There are no bugs here, no mice. We're not in a rundown bad life situation. I'm at least able to provide a decent home for them and a decent environment to be in.

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A major part of functioning as a single working parent is being able to come to terms with the nature of the role. The delegation of care giving responsibility to others for a large part of the child's day is necessary unless the parent can combine both care giving and working. In being able to feel confident and secure with alternate care giving, parents develop skills in assessing child care. They learn how to reassure their child as well as how to determine the appropriateness of a care giver. It is also necessary for the parent to acquire an understanding of the varying forms of childcare. They need to know the difference between licensed and private care and how each can differ in terms of accountability and developmental opportunities.

Mothers live with excessive care giving demands and limited resources by making accommodations in their lifestyle. In terms of needs, the researcher is referring to the needs of the parent as a worker and an adult and not only to the needs of the child. When we talk about resources, we are referring to limitations around time and finances as well as limitations in emotional and physical energy. Parents who believe they do not have enough time and money to meet household and care giving needs compensate by giving up on aspects of their lifestyle. In order to achieve a balance, they appraise the requirements of members in the family system along with the means within that system. Angie has forgone income and career advancement in order to provide the kind of care she believes is necessary.

> You need to take time for yourself and your child too. That's one of the reasons I've decided that basically my day is going to be over at the latest at 6 because if I'm working evenings past 6 then there's no time for routine, there's no time for interaction or bed time stories or that every day interaction or every afternoon interaction that's needed for the child to get to know and spend time together and socialize.

The workplace can offer not only economic independence but also personal and parental

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growth. The capacity to understand the opportunities in the working role will contribute to its integration with the parenting role. A parent can look toward coworkers as a source of advice and exposure to norms about child rearing. The workplace often functions as one of the few outlets for parents. It is a setting where they can relate to other adults and satisfy a need for peer interactions. In one study, such stimulation resulted in a spillover for a sample of working parents who reported more positive verbalizations with their child than non-working parents (Crouter and McHall 1993).

The workplace can be seen as venue for personal growth in its capacity to augment the parent's self image. All of the mothers in the study talked about having an identity outside of parenting. Lynn mentioned how her job suited her skills and temperament while another talked about the technical skills she has developed since high school. Often, the workplace can be a setting where this identity is established and nurtured. The working role provides an opportunity to acquire and utilize skills and to receive feedback on their use. Although most of the mothers stated that they found parenting rewarding, they also felt a need to establish themselves as capable in the working role.

Many of the mothers view the working role positively because it added structure to their lives and fulfilled a normative standard. Sue talked about being glad to return to work after one week of vacation because she missed how work guided her personal life and her care giving. Ann commented on how she would rather work than be on social assistance and how the working role enhanced her image as a competent care giver. Lynn saw how job satisfaction and working had a positive impact on her children.

> I like what I do so that's the biggest thing because if you enjoy what you're doing your kids will say, 'hey mom enjoys working', hopefully I'm an example, I'm a role model to them to go out and find out what you enjoy doing and do it, because if you enjoy it you're going to be better at it, you're going to do a good job.

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However, there is a need to see work as not only a place of opportunity but also a place that can constrain the parenting role. A realistic appraisal of the workplace can result in responses to work/family issues that are adaptive. Parker and Hall (1992) state that families, by nature, function in a homeostatic manner and seek to maintain cohesion and stability. Life experiences can serve to overwhelm people by introducing an over abundance of stimuli and a lack of opportunity. Working parents try to adjust to the challenges that systems such as work pose to the family. According to Kadushin (1993), workers learn what kind of behaviors will gain acceptance and what behaviors will gain disapproval. Working parents are, therefore, engaged in a dynamic process of orientating themselves to work in a manner that fits both roles. Diane found that competency and job satisfaction allowed her to more readily integrate roles.

> I've done other work and it was horrible and I never liked it and I just – oh I was mean and miserable but this one, because I can do my job, I like it, I leave it, I come home and I'm happy here too. It's not going to drag me down.

The process of integrating work and family roles requires the ability to either strategically plan a career or develop adaptive responses to the workplace. Some mothers who had the option, chose to leave the workplace rather than adapt. Others made advance preparations around their choice of career and workplaces. Those who can develop marketable skills and can find employers who offer flexible work arrangements are in the best position to solve work/family dilemmas. Some mothers rely on collective bargaining agreements to provide job security and benefits such as child care. Angie tried to establish herself as valuable and loyal employee in order to be in a position to seek accommodation as a parent.

> I guess they could find a reason to_fire_ anybody because really if the company was – they can fire you with no reason. They can fire you for no reason but why would they want to

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do that, they trained you, spent the money on training you and you're good at sales.

The mothers in the study were able to integrate the work and family roles by understanding what the workplace can offer under certain circumstances. They learn the types of concessions that can be requested and often adopt " give and take" strategies. When a dilemma appears unresolvable, they learn how to demand concessions. This entire process revolves around the nature of the situation, the attributes of the parent, parental supports and the supportiveness of the employer. The extent to which a parent has to develop adaptive skills in the workplace depends on the type of workplace as well as the personal supports that can be utilized.

> If I had no children and I was working I'd probably go to school more, I would go to school every evening, finish my paper and get my paper – whatever. I would finish school a lot faster, first off I'd have the money to do it and I'd have the time and the energy to do that, if I had no children. I do have children, I do not have the time and I do not have the energy or the money, those three things, time, energy and money, if you have kids they do come first. If I didn't go to school before I had them, oh well that's my problem.

The integration of the work/ family roles requires that a parent be in a position to preserve her emotional and physical well being. By fulfilling two roles, working mothers frequently exhaust their supply of emotional and physical resources. Time is often not sufficient to accomplish these roles adequately, let alone available for rest and renewal. Lynn uses the metaphor of needing extra batteries to explain her need for preserving personal resources.

> Oh ya, mostly I have a lot of things to do but I try and write them down and I get the most important stuff done. Do I get extra batteries for myself, I wish. I get tired and miserable and I want to run away lots of times because you have to get up – working full time and being a parent is a killer, it's just a killer.

The performance of the work/parent role is generally too involving to allow very much time for the parent to address her personal needs. Murdock (1983) argues that the task of self care

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is essential to the overall functioning of the parent and requires skills around time management, assertiveness and household management. Although techniques in self care and personal management are useful in buffering the effect of work/family demands, they do not address the fundamental problem of inadequate government and workplace policies. Lynn is an example of a parent who manages her time effectively but still has little time left for activities outside work and the family.

> I work 40 hours a week and I have to get up, get ready, get the little one out, drop her off at day care and get to work. Then after work I have to go pick her up, come home, make supper and do whatever it is they want to do or take them to ballet or whatever and then I also work some evenings, so get them ready for supper, make sure this one can babysit or get someone else to if she can't and then take off again and it's kind of hard juggling work, your kids, your home, yourself but it can be done

Single working mothers would be more able to take advantage of self care strategies if structural issues were addressed. Duxbury et al. (1991) recommend working mothers have access to problem solving and stress management programs along with access to supportive workplaces and affordable and quality child care. In Lynn's case, additional economic and child care support in her home would have helped her more than self care strategies.

Murdock (1983) describes three strategies that aid parents in managing. First, there are time management strategies that require a parent to face the real realities by determining the most important needs and sizing up energy and stress levels. Time for health maintenance and employment is considered inflexible while time needed for dining, home and clothing maintenance is considered flexible. The second strategy is for a parent to become assertive by setting priorities and being able to say no to certain demands. And third, a parent needs to be able to simplify household tasks. For Ann, work and her children's needs were the main focus and priority. The

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two responsibilities essentially consumed all of her waking hours.

> Your social time with them is only, well, I pick them up at five thirty and they normally go to bed by eight thirty, nine o'clock. Three and a half hours a day. You are awake for sixteen hours. I only get that little bit and I want to make the best of that little bit of time that I get to have with them. To do whatever, a school activity or a game.

The challenge for the working single mother is to manage both roles while also sustaining herself emotionally and physically. Time management strategies allow for a realistic appraisal of the family's needs and the parent's capabilities. This permits the parent to discard archaic standards that cannot be maintained by the family. Murdock (1983) uses the example of the parent who has a household cleaning schedule that is the same as her mothers schedule. She also talks about the parent who is overwhelmed by laundering requirements because she does not choose clothing that is durable and easy to maintain. Several mothers in the study talked about the time spent on household tasks and how they sometimes do not have the energy to accomplish these tasks. Lynn had to use positive thinking strategies to overcome physical and emotional exhaustion. Although, everyone can benefit from organizational techniques, it probably would not have alleviated Lynn's burden.

> I know I'm stressed because I feel physically, but, it will get better again. To me this too shall pass in time, it will get better financially, emotionally, physically, it'll all come together, you don't give up. You just take an extra day off and go to sleep or let your body just be sick. I have been sick and I haven't been sick in years actually for a couple years and now this year the last two weeks I've been sick – I was really sick right at the beginning and now it's just sort of like the same as it was last year and now you're feeling a little bit sick, never get really sick.

Single working mothers have to be assertive about addressing their own needs and be able to say no to certain demands. The ability to evaluate time and energy levels and to practice prioritization is an important skill. This involves placing rest and recreation among the priorities.

Murdock (1983) describes the parent who explains to her child that she would rather read a book than play with her. The need for the parent to maintain adult relationships is also important because it can rejuvenate them. Adult relationships are necessary because adults form the support network and, therefore, support from them should be reciprocated. Most of the mothers in the study did not consider rest and recreation to be a priority. Two mothers did set aside regular times to go out with friends or spend time by themselves. Diane wanted to go to the gym during lunch breaks but chose to go shopping instead. Ann held a gathering of other parents and children in her home, demonstrating that it is possible to combine adult contact and care giving responsibilities.

ii) Establishing a Supportive Workplace

Establishing a supportive workplace refers to the restructuring of an employing organization toward one that is more family supportive. It reflects the creation of an environment where supportive policies are seen as being in the best interests of both the employees and the employer.

Large organizations often have formalized policies and benefits and collective bargaining agreements. The type of organizations that employed the mothers varied. Barb and Diane worked for large hierarchical organizations with formalized workplace policies and benefits. Both Angie and Lynn worked for large organizations with limited formal policies and benefits, but Angie's workplace was more rigid while Lynn's was more flexible. Ann and Barb worked for small companies with informal personnel practices. On the other hand, there are organizations such as small businesses, that have only one level of management, often have no formalized policies and benefits and no collective bargaining agreements.

A number of mothers questioned the capacity of the organizations that employed them to

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make formal changes. Those who felt most supported were likely to be employed by a small company where the employer had more discretion and where few formal policies existed. Diane described how the large company that employed her did not consider the needs of employees and was primarily motivated by profit.

> They're just going to keep doing it, they can get more out of their employees if they can get us to work split shifts, that's if you have a woman working in upper management the same as the man she's going to be getting bonuses just like him. She's going to end up fighting just as hard as he does and if she doesn't she'll be booted out, that's just it.

An organization's transformation into a supportive workplace occurs by changing its ideology about the role an employer can play in alleviating the demands of family life. Galinsky and Stein (1990) identified a number of features of a family responsive organization. The organization must consider work/ family matters as legitimate issues and relevant to its mission. There is a need for the organizational culture to be conducive to work/family solutions. Second, the major stakeholders must support this perspective. Third, the program initiatives undertaken must be ongoing and not ad hoc in nature. Fourth, functional areas such health, personal and training are seen together. Finally, the organization adopts an open attitude toward making the workplace more family responsive by considering making the traditional workday more flexible.

Organizations are structured in ways that influence the manner in which workers are supported. Kadushin (1992) identified organizations as having two roles. One is the instrumental concern regarding production. The other is the expressive concern for employees as not only workers but also as people with issues and dilemmas. How the two dimensions function in a situation depends on the goals and the resources of the organization. Some workplaces are more production oriented and focused on instrumental and task centered concerns. Others make a

commitment to human relations by placing greater emphasis on the expressive dimension

(Kadushin, 1993). Angie tried to convince her employer of her needs as a parent by explaining the

care giving responsibilities she faced when her son was ill. The employer was primarily concerned

with staff coverage and not with acknowledging the mother's dilemma.

> She was still persistent that if I couldn't get an employee to come in to get the nurse to
> come in or get somebody to come in basically.

Organizations are influenced not only by their mission but also by organizational qualities

and employee characteristics. Auerbach (1990) found family supportive organizations were more

likely to have a greater percentage of female employees and to be located in the human service,

service or finance sector. Such workplaces tend to have other progressive employment policies.

An organization can achieve more commitment and productivity from its employees if it

adopts a holistic approach that considers their health and personal needs. Levi (1983) found that

the organization and conditions of work have been shown to be directly related to the mental as

well as the physical health of workers. Fernandez (1986) concluded that family stability and

corporate productivity are both reduced by the enormous stresses and demands of living with

work/family conflicts. As a worker, Ann felt fortunate to have an employer who was supportive

and empathetic to her needs as a parent.

> I'm very lucky to have such a good support system there. She knows, she's had enough
> people before who've had children and it's a fact of life. We all get sick. Things happen.
> God didn't create us to be perfect and if he did you would never have a sick leave
> payment plan. You just have to be understanding. Tomorrow is another day and we will
> make up our work and get on with it.

The capacity for workers to overcome the stress of work demands is enhanced by certain

modifications. Moen (1989) found that job autonomy interacts with other factors to promote well

being. Discretion for example, is more valuable in jobs that are more demanding physically or mentally. Galinsky and Stein (1990) found that workers who have the authority to solve work problems they face experience lower stress and less interference with family life. Levi (1983) concluded that individual control over work hours enhanced mental health. Ann had the discretion to manage a child care situation by delegating her work.

> I looked for it (policy regarding sick leave), there isn't one, like the day I got a call from the school saying my son was sick, I just hung up the phone and said I'd be there in half an hour

Employers who are concerned about retaining capable and dedicated employees, should consider the value in being supportive to single working mothers. Many of these mothers are more committed to the workplace by virtue of their dependency on an income to support their families. They are not only more likely to remain with an employer but are also more likely to maintain and develop their skills. Many parents use their skills and commitment to the organization as a means to obtain more support and flexibility from their employers. Barb saw how her role as a single mother affected work performance.

> I need them and I think the company recognizes that I'm a good employee and I don't bend the rules, I don't cause trouble, so they're willing to take on the flexibility of a single parent

Organizations can be deterred in implementing family responsive policies because they lack an awareness of employee needs and a concern for the implications of bringing family issues into the workplace. The lack of awareness originates from a hesitancy to learn about the needs of workers. Family issues have traditionally been viewed as a womens issue and independent from the workplace. There is a concern about the threat to managerial autonomy, equity and the potential cost to implement such programs (Auerbach, 1990; Paris, 1990).

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Research has revealed several possible benefits for organizations which implement family responsive workplace policies. Paris (1990) found that family responsive workplace policies can aid in the recruitment and retention of workers. They not only help reduce stress and boost morale but can also reduce absenteeism. The implementation of such policies can be a cost-effective way to increase competitiveness. Barb's employer did not have formalized policies.

> I had to be off with my son when he was sick for an entire week. He was 5 – 6 months old and my boss gave me a whole week off.

Organizations face the challenge of finding avenues to implement family responsive workplace policies that are fair and practical. They must find ways to be supportive to working parents without appearing to be unsupportive to employees who have no children (Fernandez, 1986). They can implement policies that are fair to all of their employees by allowing them to take advantage of such benefits as flexible work hours and the banking of hours. They can give employees a choice amongst a variety of benefits and thus allow the working parents to choose the most family supportive benefits. Sue's employer did not acknowledge that a parent may require more sick days due to care giving obligations. A system was in place to draw attention to those workers who used an inordinate number of days.

> Yeah, they seem nice to her and they seem to understand but then you know all of a sudden it doesn't matter.

The size and structure of the organization can be an important factor in the establishment of a supportive workplace. Large organizations with formal workplace policies and benefits can provide employees with consistent and guaranteed benefits that can be counted upon. Smaller employers, on the other hand, can offer more flexibility because of the informal nature of the workplace. Ann was able to informally negotiate arrangements around time off and was able to

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establish her value to the organization by being competent and loyal.

Organizations must also be aware of the specific needs for support in order to institute supports applicable to the particular context of their employees. Organizations must conduct needs assessments and also carefully plan and implement pro-family policies that are work site specific (Covin and Brush, 1993). The objectives should be made clear in order to gauge the effectiveness of these policies. According to Raabe (1990), policies may have different effects and vary in usefulness for a particular constituent.

The development of a family responsive workplace requires openness to potential options. Employers are not the only people in organizations who have difficulty conceiving of ways to make the workplace more supportive. Several mothers in the study, for example, had difficulty imagining how their workplaces could implement flexible scheduling. Ann considered how her workplace was structured.

> In our field it wouldn't work because we are such a small company and we are dependent upon every day in every hour so you could not be there at 4:00 when the office is open to 5:00.

An openness in creating more family friendly workplaces needs to be met by strategies that address the requirements of the organization and the parent. The employer must ascertain how resources can be reallocated to the best benefit of the organization and its employees. There needs to be a determination of employee needs, that is followed by a realistic plan of action. Sue, for example, was frustrated by the lack of concrete changes after the company had solicited feed back.

The development of a process for assessing and addressing employee needs should occur. The Management by Objectives (MBO) is an example of an approach that is designed to maximize employee input. Pecora and Hunter (1988) state that the first stage in this approach is to define the

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organization's role and mission. This is also an opportunity for the employer and employee to share each others perception of the job. An employer who is interested in the overall well being of employees might consider supportiveness as a goal of the organization. The next step is to select key result areas. This involves identifying the most important activities for the position and assessing the worker's time and ability. Third, performance indicators that can be used to assess job performance are specified. This is followed by an estimation of the time frame for accomplishing activities. The final step in the process is the devising of an action plan that identifies the specific behaviors that have to occur in order to achieve objectives.

The main advantage of MBO is that it brings the employer and employee together in a joint process of determining the best manner in which to achieve the organization's mandate. This approach offers an opportunity to ascertain ways to provide support to parents by specifying time frames and tasks. The MBO method is limited in workplaces where there is little flexibility around scheduling and tasks. The retail and service industries often do not lend themselves to this kind of method (Kadushin, 1993).

The principles behind the MBO method are useful to consider when organizations are implementing policies. The effort to understand the needs and perspectives of employees is paramount to ensure that they can function within the organization. Angie thought her employers should have an alternative plan in place in case an employee was unable to complete her shift.

> They should have more back-up staff too. My store is basically, the store – they only have one person at a time in the store and you're in charge of the store running so basically they maybe should be able to get a back-up.

The failure to account for family responsibilities when proposing change can affect working mothers adversely. Many have limited options in terms of child care. Diane could not see

how she would be able to maintain childcare with a projected change in schedule.

> Split shifts, like they'll call us in I work 9 hour days or whatever, they could call me in from 6 in the morning until 10 in the morning and then send me home and call me back at 6 at night til midnight or whatever.

A process like MBO can help identify the essential tasks in a position and explore options that can accommodate working parents. Flexibility to make adjustments in their schedule would benefit many working parents who do not believe they spend enough time with their children. For Ann, time is so limited she would likely benefit from even a minor alteration in scheduling.

> If I could work shorter hours, even if I could work a six- hour day instead. So that I wouldn't be so rushed in the morning. I have to drop my kids off at 8, that is what time they are supposed to be at day care. If I could take them to school and work the normal time that they go to school to pick them up after school and have time for after school activities that a lot of the children get to do

The manner in which a parent views the workplace can have a carryover effect on care giving. The workplace can be seen as a system that is interrelated with systems such as the family. Crouter and McHall (1993) theorized that work is a setting for adult socialization and development. They say the skills required for participative management are the same characteristics that are required in effective childrearing. This approach emphasizes teamwork and a democratic style to parenting. It involves the capacity to voice concerns constructively and to listen to one another. Participative management also entails the ability to problem solve and make collective decisions. Lynn is a parent who works in a setting where her skills are valued and where she has input into how her job is defined. She reflected on how her work can have a positive impact on her children.

> I like what I do so that's the biggest thing because if you enjoy what you're doing your kids will say, 'hey mom enjoys working', hopefully I'm an example, I'm a role model to

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them to go out and find out what you enjoy doing and do it, because if you enjoy it you're going to be better at it, you're going to do a good job. If you do a good job, it's a reward in itself and that is for self-esteem and it's also role modeling for my kids

Crouter and McHall (1993) found that participative management encouraged a more democratic or authoritative parenting style. Such a style is characterized by a high degree of warmth or acceptance. It also suggests a high degree of psychological autonomy or democracy. Finally, such an approach encourages behavioral control.

The pursuit of a workplace that is more supportive to families requires a cooperative effort by employers and employees. Therefore, there is a need to establish policies that are beneficial to non-parenting employees as well. Benefit plans address this issue by giving employees different options to choose from. Fernandez (1986) talks about "cafeteria benefit plans" that allow employees to select from an array of benefits of comparable value. He found 39% of women with children under the age of five years were willing to sacrifice other benefits for childcare. Lynn knew of a workplace where sick child care leave was offered in lieu of a raise.

> I know in the day care, they've given that to staff there in lieu of a raise. They didn't want the raise because they just lose money on income tax, they wanted the same but they just wanted some extra days a year so in case their son is sick or whatever that they could use that.

Child care is an area where employers can become involved. Few organizations have the capacity to support an onsite day care. Some organizations have supported employees with regard to daycare by providing vouchers for childcare or by becoming affiliated with a childcare center. The provision of vouchers can form part of a benefit plan that allows employees to select such a benefit over another (Fernandez, 1986). The affiliation with a day care can serve two purposes. Although, the researcher did not find an example of such an arrangement in the sample area.

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However, several mothers talked about the logistics of childcare and the lack of awareness by their employers about child care issues on the part of their employers. First, an affiliation can serve to develop a relationship between the childcare center and the organization that entails agreements around working hours and daycare hours. Second, such a relationship can also increase the employer's awareness of employee child care concerns.

An employer supported child care arrangement may have benefitted Diane. Although her preference was for an onsite daycare, she would have accepted a center near the workplace if it provided quality child care. An affiliation with a center may have helped her in terms of developing confidence in the center.

> I checked at work to see if we could get a day care at work on my lunch break but there's not enough green space around there so they won't do anything with daycare. They can't do anything down there. I looked at some daycares downtown, that I could maybe walk to. I just found that they were so shabby I couldn't even find one that I wanted to be in, let alone that I would put my daughter in

An organization can be responsive to working parents by addressing their needs regarding flexible scheduling and sick child care leave. The need for flexibility in scheduling was identified as an important issue by all of the mothers in the study. This can involve the opportunity to modify working hours to accommodate care giving responsibilities. Some of the mothers chose to work part time when their children were younger while others stated a preference to work fewer hours. Arrangements exist where parents have been able to switch to part-time from full-time and then back to full time. Other workplaces offer the opportunity to work a compressed four day week or create an option where employees can bank overtime hours for use when they need them.

The matter of sick child care is one of most contentious issues facing employers and working mothers. Production and coverage dilemmas occur when they have to leave the

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workplace in order to respond to their sick child. This can cause discontent amongst other employees who have to fill in and stress for parents who have to forfeit their wages and vacation time. The implementation of formal policies to address this need is essential. Many of the mothers in the study had to negotiate or demand accommodation around this problem. Employers who provide leave for sick child care and who organize backup staffing arrangements are likely to not only alleviate the stress on working parents, but are also likely to make a positive impact on staff morale. Sick child care leave can be implemented in a way that is equitable and adequate. The option of using regular sick time is available in some workplaces. Employers can support single parents by advancing them sick days during the age periods when children are most susceptible to illness. Flexibility in the use of available benefits would have aided Diane.

> When she's sick, I've had to use my vacation. Now, they're making me take my vacation right now because they won't let me take it at Christmas and since she's been so sick I didn't want to take it until the end of the year and they won't let me take it at the end of the year

Employment Assistance Programs (EAP) are an avenue for single working parents to acquire information and support. Many North American employers are hiring or are contracting with professional counsellors to provide services to employees for problems ranging from addictions to financial problems (Raabe, 1990; Fernandez, 1986). A counsellor can offer validation and understanding to an isolated parent by assisting them in the process of accepting the single parent role. A counsellor is also able to facilitate the individual's engagement in a problem solving effort.

Only one of the mothers, Bev, mentioned having an EAP program. She had briefly used the program for bereavement counselling.

First of all it took me six weeks after the crisis to get into work, but the crisis is over, I don't need it right now.

Most of the mothers mentioned having financial issues that could not be remedied through financial planning. They could not, for instance, choose to work fewer hours in order to have more time for care giving. One mother, Lynn, chose such an option and found it resulted in long term financial strain.

A number of mothers in the study chose to alter their working arrangements when their children were young. Some of them left the workforce rather than be in an unsuitable work arrangement. The desire to remain in the home often occurs when the child is under two years old. An employer who is willing to negotiate an extended leave or alternate work schedule can often maintain the employee on a long term basis (Raabe, 1990). Diane took as much time as she could after her daughter was born. Financial considerations eventually determined when she had to return.

I took the maternity leave and the parental leave. I got both of them and then I took 2 months extra. They will give you an extra 6 months off without pay. It's like 4 months for maternity leave, 2 months for parental leave and then they'll let you have a 6 month leave of absence without pay. So you pretty much go until you've got no money left and then you go back to work.

All of the mothers in the study reported having to live within tight financial limitations. Those who decided to work fewer hours were more vulnerable to financial pressures. The reasons for these pressures also extend beyond the workplace. An employer cannot be expected to compensate employees more because of their personal status. However, they can aid the working parent by offering to help him/her plan for changes in circumstances.

Employers can be supportive by recognizing the importance of the psychological and

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emotional well being of their employees. Kadushin (1993) describes supportive supervision as the process of helping employees adjust to job related stress. This involves the provision of facilities, services, information and training around the instrumental aspects of the organization. It also encompasses a process of ensuring that employees are comfortable, satisfied and happy in their work and have a sense of psychological well being.

Throughout this study we have explored the connection between work and family life. It is difficult to separate the stresses that occur in the home and at work. Ellen identified support as entailing an understanding of the dual responsibilities.

> I guess the employer should look at like the background or the home front, if you have children and what age they are because – and for a single parent, I mean take them off to day care and to school, get themselves ready to work comes home, pick up the kids from day care or school, make supper, it's a big weight on that single parent's shoulders and if the employer is not understanding then it's going to effect the job performance or it's going to affect the children – someone's going to pay either at work or at home.

Kadushin (1993) identifies supportive supervision as those tasks that reduce anxiety, affirm assets, replenish self esteem, restore emotional equilibrium, reduce guilt and relieve dissatisfaction. To be effective, social support needs to be significantly related to the particular problem that is the source of the strain. General undifferentiated social support may not provide effective buffering. There is a need to convey to employees the sense that the employer understands their situation and is willing to do everything in his/her power to help them alleviate it.

The mothers who experience a work/family conflict, such as having to address the needs of a sick child, recognized the importance of not only instrumental support like time off, but also emotional support in the form of reassurance and understanding. Ann describes how her relationship with her employer has evolved into a supportive one

We are good friends, and I'm very loyal to him. You see he realizes and sees that when I'm sick, or my kids are sick, I really feel bad

Understanding the dual nature of the working and parenting role is paramount to providing effective support. Several mothers in the study believed it is important for employers to understand their parenting responsibilities. For the mothers, this recognition validated the experience of being a single working parent. Diane found that the lack of understanding and acceptance of this role affected her relationship with co-workers.

The people at work, my co-workers, I've heard a couple little comments here and there about my being off all the time because if they don't have somebody to fill my job, if they can't get somebody in on overtime then the people have to cover by unit. There's about 20 other people,.so I've heard a few little comments here and there

A fundamental element in becoming supportive, is being able to understand the reality of the single working parent. It requires the ability to understand how environmental stress can overwhelm a person (Abrams, 1983). According to Murdock (1983) single working parents often must manage with a variety of emotions. Many experience an inordinate amount of loneliness because of limited time for adult relationships. Feelings of guilt in not being able to spend more time with the child are often prevalent. An overly strong dependency can occur between the parent and child and can inhibit the child from functioning as an individual or at an age appropriate level. Finally, many single parents experience anger in having to fulfill demanding roles without adequate support.

The intimate relationship between the parent and child is often difficult for employers to understand even though the employer her/himself may also be a parent. This can be attributed to the longstanding ideology that holds work and family life to be separate (Piotrkowski, 1979). The

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mothers in the study wanted their employers to know about the effect that parenting has on their working role.

Employers need to understand the psychological and emotional implications of working and parenting. The study found that some mothers had to cope with the emotional burden of the dual roles by prioritizing the needs of their children ahead of the needs of the job. The importance of having a trusted child care giver is another emotional aspect of managing the dual role. The working parent also needs to be available to the child at critical times. In the case of the sick child, the availability of the parent not only to meets care giving needs, but also emotional needs.

The process of understanding the single working parent is integral in assisting them towards coping with mastering the work and family environments. This is not to suggest that employers need to play a predominant part in the employee's supportive network. It does suggest, however, that they need to function as part of this network and should not be divorced from it. The employer can serve to reinforce the assets of employees and help them develop a sense their ability to master their environment (Kadushin, 1993).

Supporting employees enhances their mastery of this environment by recognizing certain fundamental human needs. Support is part of a process that considers wellness and productivity in the workplace as inseparable The need to feel part of a caring network and not feel isolated is one need. Kadushin (1993) says addressing this need can enhance a sense of self as someone deserving of caring and thus capable of caring for others. The workplace also offers opportunities for parents to structure childrearing in qualitatively different ways (Crouter and McHall, 1993). As was mentioned earlier, workplace practices such as participative management can reinforce democratic and authoritative parenting.

A supportive employer has the opportunity to be part of the working parent's role integration. The contribution of the employer to this integration is consistent with the mission of most organizations. Employers who are supportive can enhance productivity by reducing stress. Being supportive will also aid in their recruitment and retention potential, help morale and reduce absenteeism. In terms of the bottom line, it can be a cost-effective way to increase competitiveness (Paris, 1990).

iii) Expanding the Responsibility for Childcare

The mothers in the study faced financial limitations and care giving dilemmas that could not be completely solved with a supportive workplace. Baines et al. (1998) says that caring is undervalued and that women assume an inordinate amount of the costs and consequences of caring. The responsibility for caring had consequences for mothers in the study. The development of their careers and their earning potential were affected by the logistics of the dual roles and by the cost of childcare. These problems can be linked to the manner in which care giving is undervalued and to the way in which women assume an inordinate amount of responsibility for it.

The eco-systemic perspective is useful when describing how a parent is transacting with not only a work system, but also with a system of child care. The family as well as outside care can be seen as part of the child care system. If parents are recognized for the instrumental and affective care they provide their own children, the family system and the childcare system do overlap. However, Ferguson (1998) says caring for one's own children is not officially regarded as work .

Funding for child care was identified as a major issue for Ann, Sue and Lynn. Sue took advantage of child care that was supported by the education system. The cost of private child care influenced her in relocating to an area of the city that offered school sponsored child care.

Because it's in Winnipeg 1, Winnipeg School Division 1 has free nursery. All other school divisions you have to pay for it, so that's why. If I had to pay for it I wouldn't send her to nursery because I have to pay a babysitter and nursery, it gets too expensive, so it's like because it's free I'll send her to nursery and then the sitter. I actually moved out of River East I believe it was into Winnipeg 1 so that she would – first of all so I'd be close to the sitter and second of all because of free nursery because they couldn't cross register at the time when I moved.

Sue's decision highlights how child care is sponsored differently. Private or informal care can be costly because it is not tax deductible if the provider does not issue receipts. Licensed care is tax deductible and subsidized but still costly to working mothers. However, child care that is considered educational receives full public funding.

The current system of funding child care underlines the manner in which caring for children is undervalued. If a general child care benefit was available to mothers regardless of their use of outside care, this would recognize the importance of caring work.. The current system only recognizes caring work done outside the home or by non-kin in the home(i.e. nanny). Furthermore, private childcare, which is the most predominant and flexible form of care, is the most underfunded. If parents received a higher tax deduction for private care, this would acknowledge the value of caring by helping them obtain the most practical arrangement.

The delegation of care to others was a major issue for several mothers in the study. A central factor in the delegation of care is the mothers concern about her child receiving adequate, affective and instrumental care. The confidence in care giving could be increased if the child care system was adequately funded to reflect the importance of caring. Ann saw the value in having trained and qualified staff to ensure her children received appropriate levels of care. Mothers like her and Diane also expressed concern about the lack of spaces in licensed child care centres. More funding for licensed care would result in more spaces and would prevent mothers, such as Ann,

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from turning to care givers with whom they are not comfortable.

> The only thing I didn't like was private sitters because they are not as cautious of your children it seems like. They are not licenced. They are just an average person, you know, they are babysitters.

Low staff to child ratios are also a factor influencing a mother's confidence in alternate care giving. The lack of funding to licensed day cares results in staffing levels that do not allow for adequate affective and instrumental care. Angie consider one to one ratios ideal but a ratio of more than five children to one staff member as unacceptable.

> There was also one day care also that had an illegal ratio of kids – it was like 8 to 1 for two-year olds when it should be six to one and that I don't approve of. I was trying to look for a day care with low ratio of one to one, three to one or four to one or five to one which is a little hard to find.

Diane questioned the quality of child care in both formal and informal settings. She also expressed concerns about having access to quality child care.

> I'm her main caregiver and I'm always around, like I don't get babysitters or anything so she just knows. She's got a structured life and, that's the way I want it, she's safe and secure.

Funding for care in the informal system needs to reflect its importance to many parents. Private care is chosen because of personal preferences and because of inadequacies in the formal system. Sue said that a private sitter provided a family environment and met her needs as a working parent. As a shift worker who also loses income if she leaves the job for health or personal reasons, Sue needed a care giver who had flexible hours and who could care for an ill child.

> the sitter has never phoned me at work and said, your daughters sick you have to come home' whereas a licensed babysitter if they get sick at the licensed babysitters place, they start throwing up, they're going to phone you and say, 'come home you're kid's throwing up'. I mean because of my private babysitter I've never been in that situation.

Ann's concern about adequate care in an unlicenced home and Sue's need and preference for such care can be addressed with policies that support informal care giving. The government can have input by providing training, setting standards and offering better financial support. The informal system will become more legitimate if it is integrated into the formal system (Ferguson, 1998).

In Manitoba, the cost of formal licensed child care is buffered by a subsidy system. However, low middle income parents such as Lynn find the regressive nature of the subsidy stifles their earning potential. When she worked full-time, she paid over $100.00 a month more in daycare fees. On an annual income of approximately $25,000 a year and with two older children, she found this obligation impossible to meet.

> I used to pay $300 in day care, that's an awful lot of money and I don't have it – so I'm behind, it's like $200 a month that I have to pay for her so if I'm behind a little bit on one there goes my fee right up to $300 again and that kills you because it's just – you just don't make – you don't get ahead.

The Government subsidizes childcare to low income families and penalizes those families who experience an increase in income. Because she did not receive child support, Ann's subsidy remained low. If she had received it, her subsidy would have been reduced dollar for dollar.

> I still pay $130.00 a month, which is fair, I don't mind paying my fair share. It's based on your income. Or what your situation is. If you are not getting support, child support, they take that into consideration. If you are getting child support they count that as income so they bring your level back up.

> It is fairly rated for everyone thousand, you know, but you have to report everything, when they ask for subsidy forms you have to give them your life on paper.

Expanding responsibility for child care requires enhancement of the formal system and recognition of the informal system. According to Ferguson (1998) most parents would prefer formal care if it were affordable and flexible. The mothers in the study identified lower day care fees, care for sick children, after hours care, and increased day care staffing as important issues. These concerns underscore how the reality of underfunded and inflexible childcare can affect their economic and vocational potential.

A greater recognition of the informal system will aid in acknowledging the complexities of care giving. This is a system that is highly utilized but vastly underfunded (Ferguson, 1998). The use of informal care reflects the manner in which parents must organize their child care. They are driven by not only economic and scheduling issues but also by a need to ensure the best possible care for their children. More recognition of these demands will result in child care options that are affordable and satisfactory and not the result of a compromise.

Intervening Condition

Supportive Workplaces and Family Responsive Social Policies

The intervening condition for integration is the presence of a supportive workplace and the existence of responsive family social policies. The presence of these conditions results in the valuing of single working mothers as workers and as care givers and is central to our definition of integration. These parents are often very skilled and dedicated. A workplace that is not responsive to their needs as working parents is the main hindrance to them reaching their potential as workers.

Family social policies need to address the undervaluing of caring by allocating resources based on the importance of this role. Child care is a necessity for working mothers. They talk about

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the lack of flexibility, availability and quality in child care. They also talk about having to meet the financial needs of their family on a single income and having to bear the burden of child care costs. A child care system that is more appropriately funded and an income distribution system that does not stigmatize families would be a move toward the validation of caring.

Organizations need to work toward cultural and structural change in order to conform to the reality of overlapping family and work dilemmas. Organizations that rely on a large number of women employees are under the most pressure to develop family responsive policies. Policies and benefits are being developed that accommodate working parents with childcare support, flexible workdays and sick child care leave. Without such benefits, organizations face high turnover and absenteeism among their employees. Many see advantages for the organization in responding to employee family issues.

The formalization of workplace policies and benefits is a key factor in valuing the care giving done by working parents. Comprehensive family responsive policies are often implemented by organizations that are interested in the retention and recruitment of employees. The kind of organizations that are interested in establishing a" family friendly" workplace tend to be progressive organizations with large female workforces. They see as no longer relevant the traditional corporate culture that considers the workplace as separate from family life. In order to maintain a competitive advantage they are open to providing innovative benefits and alternative work arrangements.

Lynn was the only mother in the study who worked for an organization with formalized family policies. Other mothers such Barb and Ann worked for companies where there was an informal arrangement and a understanding employer. Lynn's employers were understanding and

flexible but she also had the benefit of a union contract.

> They've been great, really good, even with people who are on term. I could not ask for better support. And if my daughter or I am sick, I'm covered by the union.

Diane worked for an employer with a union contract and where she was the only single mother. The collective bargaining agreement included a number of days for sick child care and extended maternity leave. However, the work schedule was not family responsive and was in danger of becoming less flexible.

> I think they have been very understanding with my situation. While I was pregnant they were really good. I was off work a lot while I was pregnant. I think they've done really well. I think that they were not fair to the employees, and I'm not even talking about single parents, I'm talking about any parent, when they went against the union.

Collective bargaining agreements have the most potential to broaden the availability of family responsive policies. Otherwise, only organizations with a vested interest in retaining female workers are likely to implement formal policies. Other organizations are more liable to maintain informal arrangements as a way of meeting the needs of working parents without validating the role.

Diane and Sue worked for organizations that were male dominated and covered by union contracts. Although Diane was grateful for the extended maternity leave and sick child care leave, she would have appreciated an agreement that assisted her with childcare and permitted flexible scheduling. Sue's collective bargaining agreement did not offer sick child care and her job was not suited to flexible scheduling. She would have benefitted from having sick child care and evening child care.

Social policies can only be regarded as supportive if they address the fundamental issue of

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the undervaluing of caring. This will require the distribution of income to working mothers based on their role as care givers and not on their financial need. Current social policies tend to reinforce caring as a woman's responsibility. As the primary care givers, they are taxed on child support payments, income tested on child tax benefits and expected to pay the full cost of daycare. A single working mother who is able to earn more income will see her daycare costs climb. This reality was especially difficult for Lynn who found receiving child support for two older children resulted in higher day care costs for her younger non-supported child.

> Not really, I think – not my employer so much as maybe legislation where the day care itself doesn't – if you're a single parent family where they're making you pay less. Instead of jacking you up every time you get a penny more somewhere they take it away. If I get any kind of money given to me day care takes it away right away, just right away and it has nothing to do with the child that's in day care.

Social policies need to be extended to better support the child care system. The current system is based on child care being primarily a private responsibility. Funding amounts to a subsidization of those unable to assume full responsibility. The notion of child care as a private responsibility needs to replaced with a recognition of caring as critical to society's requirement for productive members.

The lack of quality in the child care system is a reflection on how the caring role is undervalued. Mothers such as Diane and Angie expressed concern that low staff to child ratios compromised supervision and safety. Diane emphasized the importance of affective care when she described how important it was to her daughter's sense of security to have a stable and consistent care giver. This mother's experience underlines how child care involves not only custodial care but also emotional care.

> Cindy is her main caregiver, she feeds her, puts her down for a nap. If anything is going

on Cindy is there so Cindy is her caregiver from like 7:30 in the morning until 4 in the afternoon when she goes home. There are other people, there's other adults in there looking after the other children so my daughter knows that Cindy is her caregiver.

The caring role is valued when there are care giving options that meet the needs of working mothers. Barb and Sue used the informal child care system of private sitters and relatives because of their availability and flexibility. The formal system of licensed centres and family daycares is better funded but often less flexible and available. Improved funding for licensed centres is necessary so that they can expand their hours to suit working mothers. The importance of the informal system as a source of support to mothers should be recognized through funding such as tax credits. Angie was once fortunate to find evening child care at a licenced centre but it soon became no longer accessible.

Child care was good that time because I had a day care that had evening care and they were really flexible.

Social policies and family responsive workplace policies play a dual role in validating working mothers as workers and care givers. Organizations that recognize family issues with formal policies legitimize the challenges these parents face in balancing both roles. By the same token, social policies have to support the caring done by women by supporting informal and formal child care as well as care done in the home.

Chapter VI

Discussion

A) Introduction

The findings in this study focus on many of the same issues identified by mothers in other studies (Lee, et al 1994; Lero & Brockman, 1993; Paris, 1990). Lee et als. (1994) found that employed mothers balanced work and family life by employing individual time management and coping strategies and by utilizing family, employer and community resources. Lee et als. (1994) study of 300 employed mothers in the federal public service was comprised of 75% married women and 25% single women. It therefore, emphasized the role of the spouse in balancing both roles. In the CNCC Study, mothers were found to be the most effected by work/family conflict. Managing work and family demands can leave little time for relaxation and can detract from the pleasures of parenting and family life. The study found that persistent work/family conflict when combined with a lack of social support, has been known to cause stress, depression and anxiety as well as adversely affect physical health and well being, and parent child interaction (Lero & Brockmann, 1993).

This section also examines the role of social policy in ameliorating the impact of work and family conflict. The problem of the invisibility of caring is considered in light of social policies that promote female dependency on males, the state and the market place. The vast majority of primary child care givers are women who almost always experience economic dependency and fewer options because of this role.

i) Background

The successful management of a dual role is often insufficient in enhancing a mother's

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sense of well being and satisfaction. A working mother's job status, marital status and age of her children can have an important bearing on her ability to deal effectively with what are frequently conflicting responsibilities. Even among those who are coping relatively well, a large proportion often consider leaving their job (Lee et al, 1994).

The labour force participation of women has become essential for most Canadian families to avoid poverty. According to Statistics Canada (1992) lone parent families comprised 20% of all families in 1991 compared to 17% in 1976. Eighty two percent of these families are headed by women. It has been estimated that without the labour force participation of women, close to 300,000 Canadian families would be living below the poverty line (Canadian Advisory Council, 1994).

Formal policies at the government and organizational level are necessary in order to address the inequities in opportunity for working mothers. This is based on the premise that equality for all workers, particularly women, cannot be achieved if workers with dependents are not afforded the same treatment and range of employment opportunities as workers without dependents (Lero & Brockmann, 1993). The role of government in ensuring opportunity has been mostly through the support of parental leave and the support of child care through income tax deductions. Legislation around parental leave has consisted of a maximium of 15 weeks of employment insurance for mothers at a maximum of 60% of the workers insurable earnings. This recently has been increased by another 10 weeks and includes both mothers and fathers (Human Resource Canada, 1999).

Collective bargaining agreements provide a means for introducing change in the workplace. Work-family related benefits and arrangements have not been a priority for unions. In

1992, less than one-quarter of collective bargaining agreements contained provisions for flexible work hours and less than one-fifth addressed extended parental leave and only 3% had provisions for child care facilities. These figures are even more significant given that less than one-third of Canada's work force is unionized (Lero & Brockmann, 1992).

ii)Historical Context

The predominance of women in the single parenting role can be linked to the historical relationship between production and reproduction. Understanding this relationship has become more necessary given the changes in family composition and workforce demographics. The "classic 1950s-style family" consisting of a working father, a homemaker mother and one or more children describes less than 10% of all Canadian households (Lee et al, 1994). Eighty-two per cent of single parent families are headed by women (Canadian Advisory Council, 1994). The incidence of poverty for female headed families in 1991 was 62% compared to 10.7% for two parent families (Statistics Canada, 1991).

During the past 50 years there has been a substantial increase in the labour force participation of women. Without the labour force participation of women, close to 300,000 Canadian families would be living in poverty (Canadian Advisory Council , 1994). The feminist perspective is useful in aiding our understanding of the nature of women's involvement in the workforce. As was indicated earlier, this perspective generally regards the economic and social system as a system of patriarchy that generates systematic inequalities between men and women (Folbre, 1987).

An examination of the interplay between productive and reproductive labour within a patriarchal capitalist system is necessary in order to understand the role women traditionally play in

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the workforce. It offers insight as too why there is resistance amongst employers to incorporate family responsive workplace policies. Domestic labour or reproduction does not have a market value within the capitalist system. Labour that does have market value is subjected to downward pressure on wages and upward pressure on productivity in order to enhance surplus value. The pressure placed on productive labour and the lack of recognition of reproductive labour results in the paid labour of both men and women being used to subsidize the cost of reproduction (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1990).

During the post-war era and into the 1950s and the 1960s, the role of women as the primary care givers of children allowed them to act as a reserve army of labour. Women traditionally have had transient participation in the workforce. They have tended to leave the work force when their children are under the age of three. In traditional families, the husband serves as the primary breadwinner while the wife's labour force participation is closely related to her child caring responsibilities (Fernandez, 1986). Such a position has been advantageous to the capitalist system. The constant quest to increase profits leads to pressure to sell more commodities and to pay less for labour. Women have played a role in the manner labour has been organized by serving as a reserve army during upturns in economic activity. Such a pool of labour helps keep wages down and discourages disputes by heightening fears of job security (Kitchen, 1992; Armstrong & Armstrong, 1990).

The reluctance of the state and the private sector to subsidize the cost of reproduction has been cited by Aldous (1990) as a reason for inadequate family responsive work place policies. The traditional approach is to view work and family as segregated by both geography and gender. Rather than considering the family as the primary domain of the employee's wife, emerging sex

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roles have redefined family and work roles. As was mentioned, changes in living patterns and rising divorce rates have led to more households being headed by one parent while in others, participation in household and work activity is not differentiated by gender (Duxbury ,1990).

iii) Comparative Context

Working mothers identify time management as a major factor in being able to manage work and family responsibilities. Lee et al. (1994) found that given an extra hour each day, women with young children were more likely to report that they would spend this time with their children. The data found that only three percent of mothers with pre-schoolers said they spend some of their time in individual leisure compared to 11.4% of mothers of young school age children and 22.4% of mothers of adolescents. Lynn was the only mother in the study who mentioned going out on a regular basis to enjoy individual leisure. Others mentioned being able to enjoy a very occasional outing. Diane chose to shop during lunch breaks instead of going to the gym while Sue found personal time when her daughter was asleep.

Lee et al. (1994) reported that the mothers of pre-schoolers reported above average stress. On the other hand, single mothers reported less stress than married mothers. The study lacked a comparison group of married mothers and therefore could not test this finding. Lynn did shed light on why she found single parenting less stressful than married life. She said a non-supportive spouse can consume more emotional and physical energy.

The capacity to cope is enhanced by the ability to delegate parenting tasks. A large percentage of married mothers (84.1 %) report that their spouses helped them balance work and family responsibilities by helping out with household chores while 60.1% reported that their partners helped them with child care. Single mothers indicate that support from extended family

allowed them to balance work and family (Lee et al, 1994). Angie and Barb reported having

boyfriends who provided significant levels of support. Barb was the only mother who described

having extensive extended family supports.

Lee et al. (1994) describe prioritization as a major coping strategy. They found that

72.6% of single mothers compared to 63.2% of married mothers identified it as their primary

coping mechanism. More single mothers than married mothers (12.9%-9.5%) said they relied on

organizational skills in order to cope. The study refers to prioritization and organization under the

strategies of organizing and adapting. The mothers in the study prioritized and organized by

lowering previously held household standards and by economizing.

Most of the mothers in Lee et al. (1994) study reported that they had exhausted all of

their personal resources. They determined that improvements would have to occur outside the

family system and in the community and the workplace. Otherwise, as this study uncovered,

mothers often adopt attitudes that rationalize their exhaustion and, thus, give it meaning. Excessive

demands and inadequate resources are viewed as part of the parenting role.

The mothers in the study reported that high quality and accessible daycare was a resource

that they needed in order to cope with work and family responsibilities. Ann, Diane and Angie

talked about the importance of government standards in instilling confidence in their child's care.

The mothers saw the daycare environment as not only offering supervision and learning

opportunities, but also offering emotional support to them as parents. Diane and Barb found that

they shared a bond with the daycare staff around meeting the needs of their children.

An organization can play a major role in helping mothers balance work and family

responsibilities. In Lee et al's (1994) study 71% of the single parents compared to 62.2% of

married parents valued work leave for family reasons. Seventy three per cent of mothers with preschoolers valued such a benefit over 59% of mothers with children from the age of 6-13 . Interestingly, 37.8% of married mothers valued flexible work hours compared to 16.1% of single mothers. The valuing of family leave is consistent with this study's findings around the problems faced by mothers when their child is ill. Single mothers of preschool children are less likely to value flex-time because they must work the time, nevertheless, in order to bring enough income into the household. A consistent work schedule is more desirable because it corresponds with the daycare's schedule. Lynn was an exception. She valued flex-time because she had access to alternate childcare that included her adolescent child.

The availability of flex-time can be beneficial to single working mothers if it can be coordinated with alternate child care. Lynn was able to use time off during the day to take her children to medical appointments. The time she used came from hours that had been banked. She was able to find evening child care and, more importantly, was able to use the flextime hours in a manner that suited her family's needs.

The opportunity to work at home was considered more important to single mothers (17.7%) than married mothers (12.4%) (Lee et al, 1994). Ann occasionally worked at home on an informal basis. This work was not credited to her but was used to demonstrate her commitment and value to the company. Diane saw working at home as feasible. However, she did not see her employers adopting it because of their preference to have employees on location.

Working mothers stated that job security was a factor that allowed them to cope better. In Lee et al. (1994), the importance of job security was consistent for single and married mothers but higher for mothers of preschool children. In this study, Diane said she would not trade her job

security for flexible work hours. Ann stressed the importance of job security by outlining the loyalty that exists between her and her employer. Sue said she was reluctant to leave her shift work position because of her seniority.

The need for understanding and supportive management should be considered in the context of the organization's policies and benefits. A supportive supervisor can help compensate for the lack of formal policies by providing sufficient flexibility when work-family conflicts arise. Likewise, a supportive supervisor can influence the extent to which a mother utilizes a given benefit (Lee et al 1994). Ann, Bev and Lynn found they could depend on their supervisors for understanding despite a lack of formal policies. Diane's workplace had a formal policy around sick child care leave but she was hesitant to use this benefit because of perceived attitudes.

The absence of formal policies and benefits can be partially offset by an understanding employer. On one hand, such a situation can provide employers with the opportunity and the flexibility to accommodate working parents. On the other hand, Lee et al. (1994) found that the lack of policies can result in the mother having feelings of frustration when inequities are perceived. Diane was grateful to her employers for their support but was also discouraged by the perceptions of her co-workers. Ann had felt she was under more pressure to perform in order to justify the informal support she received from her employers.

Government and organizational responses to caring reflect a continued emphasis on private responsibility. Organizations that introduce family responsive policies are motivated by a need for effective personnel management. The rationale of government should be to ameliorate systemic inequities. A patriarchal system promotes an ideology of gender expectations and devaluation. Counteracting the inequities requires policies that recognize the value of caring and

change the gender imbalance.

B) Recommendations

i) Changing the Workplace

Spak (1998) recommends that employers undertake an audit of the organizational culture and work environment. Changing traditional managerial attitudes should be a goal of the organization. Programs need to be developed that increase awareness of work/family issues among managers. Likewise, managers need the support of upper management in applying supportive policies that can sometimes compromise short term productivity.

The implementation of flexible workplace policies requires an adjustment in how managers evaluate performance. It means having a focus on contribution rather than on presence. A flexible attendance policy, for example, avoids rigid interpretation, rigorous monitoring and strict reporting. This can be accomplished with simplified policies that involve unlimited paid personal days. Sick days can therefore be used to care for a sick child. Without an allotted number of sick days, employees do not feel entitled to use them or feel anxious about not having enough days. The emphasis is on trust and responsibility (Spak, 1998).

A more open approach to absenteeism can promote better morale and employer/employee relations. The use of strict criteria for absences does not consider individual needs. It can result in dishonesty. The fairness of such policies is often questioned because of difficulty in applying them and can result in a problem known as presenteeism where employees are present but lack the emotional and physical energy to perform the job (Spak, 1998).

Organizations should explore work at home options as a way of accommodating absent

employees. An employee who must take an occasional day off for a sick child can often accomplish work through the use of portable technologies. Cellular telephone, electronic mail, voice mail and fax transmitting are examples of technologies that can be utilized in the home (Lee et al, 1994).

The restructuring of the traditional work day is one way in which working parents can be aided. Lee et al (1994) recommends two approaches to providing flexibility. One allows employees a 30-90 minute window with which to start the day. The other approach allows the employee to take every third Friday off by arriving to work 30 minutes early.

Family responsive workplace practices need to be legitimatized with formal policies. Other benefits should be available to non-parenting employees in order to enhance equity. Legitimization and equity will serve to reduce informal practices that are patronizing to working parents and viewed as unfair to non-working parents (Auerbach, 1990). The long term benefits of comprehensive formal policies may be improved retention and recruitment of employees. Working mothers in the study faced having to selectively choose or alter their working environment.

The working mothers in the study reported having exhausted personal resources, and many could benefit from programs that promote wellness. Organizations and government can play a role by offering single working mothers and other parents programs that teach coping strategies, time management and stress management. Employers can serve as a vehicle to facilitate access to information on community resources (Lee et al, 1994). They can also make counselling available to employees through Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and offer fringe benefits such as memberships in fitness clubs.

Organizations can aid working mothers by exploring ways in which they can support them with child care. The establishment of an onsite daycare is a feasible option for a small number

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of organizations. For those organizations that cannot have their own daycare, an affiliation with a nearby centre could be an option. Such an affiliation would allow the employer to work with the centre regarding employee work and care giving issues. Fernandez (1986) says the provision of vouchers for child care has been used by some organizations. An employer can make vouchers a part of a package of benefits that a working mother can choose over another benefit.

ii) Altering Inequities

Women as caregivers in Canada face a future of fewer opportunities and continued devaluation of the care giving role. A change from a 1980s neo-conservative government to a neoliberal government has not changed the formula for economic growth and prosperity (Pulkingham & Ternowetsky, 1996). The labour market has become less secure while social security programs have become the subject of cutbacks (Lochhead & Shalla, 1996). The traditional nuclear family, which describes only one fifth of all Canadian families, is being promoted through policies that ensure women's dependency on men, on the welfare state and on limited options in the labour market (Baines et al, 1998).

Single working mothers are at a disadvantage in the labour market. They often leave the labour market for periods of time and often accept positions that will accommodate them as parents (Myles & Pical, 1986). The low market income they experience is exacerbated by the regressive nature of the tax system. The labour market has fewer middle income jobs and is becoming more polarized (Lochhead & Shalla, 1996).

The majority of female headed lone parent households are in a position of poverty or near poverty. Income tax increases along with inflation have left middle to lower income families with $1400.00 less than 10 years ago. A family earning $29,276 in 1984 earned $26,291.00 in 1993. In

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contrast, a family earning $59,224.00 in 1984 earned $61,333 in 1993 (Lochead & Shalla, 1996).

The erosion of income began occurring in 1986 when full indexation of income was replaced by

partial indexation (CSD, 1997).

The loss in income for families has been coupled by reductions in social assistance by the

provinces. The provinces face having to finance these programs with less money from federal

transfer payments. As was indicated earlier, the pressure to reduce the cost of social programs

reinforces the ideology of self reliance with regards to care giving (Lochhead & Shalla, 1996).

Most provinces are instituting work incentive programs to pressure parents on social assistance to

re-enter the workforce. Single parents of school age children are considered to be in a position to

be self supporting (CSD, 1997).

In Manitoba, a program known as "Taking Charge" was created to assist single parents

on social assistance to re-enter the workforce. The much heralded program was intended to

facilitate access to a child care, education, job training and employment opportunities (Winnipeg

Free Press, 1994). Taking Charge is designed to provide individualized case management and

referral but does not provide access to new resources. One observer who new several women in the

program found that they did not acquire the middle income positions necessary for them to support

a family. The initiative also did not solve the child care dilemma by providing more affordable and

accessible options. Nevertheless, many women have re-entered the workforce under Taking Charge

and have been able to acquire basic job skills and education (Dean, 1999).

Although programs such as Taking Charge are able to assist many people in accessing and

acquiring employment opportunities, they must not be considered the answer to the problem facing

single parents. Without more child care resources and higher waged employment opportunities,

they serve only to reinforce the myth that employment and single parenthood are compatible if one is more organized and aware. An effective initiative has to address the matter of care giving being undervalued and being regarded as a private responsibility (Ferguson, 1998). The tendency for single mothers to be forced into low income positions because of child care responsibilities and a lack of skills also needs to be addressed (Mitchelson, 1985).

The new integrated child tax benefit corresponds with the federal government agenda to decrease the reliance of families on social programs and increase their reliance on the labour market. This program pools together dollars that once had been used for federal provincial transfer payments for social assistance. While it is intended to improve the incomes of poor working families, it also creates employment incentives for families with children on social assistance (CSD.,1997).

The trend toward funding social programs is not likely to result in new initiatives in day care funding. Although there have been no changes in subsidy rates in Manitoba since 1993, daycare funding is no longer protected as it was under the Canada.Assistance.Plan (CAP) (Pulkingham & Ternowetsky, 1996). Further erosion to the formal daycare system could result in lower subsidies and even less availability of day care spaces. More working parents will be forced to use the informal child care system.

Progressive social policies are needed to offset the imbalance caused by the patriarchal system. If there is to be a defeminization of caring, it will require a shift away from the current prescription for growth and prosperity. Social programs are a necessity in societies where inequities exist and should not been seen as a deterrent to growth and prosperity (CSD, 1997).

This study has shown the extent to which single working mothers depend on alternate

child care in order to maintain employment. A high quality and affordable daycare system can result in mothers who have confidence in their child's care and who believe employment is in the best interests of the family. Two mothers expressed concerns about the method of calculating the daycare subsidy. A family of four with one child in daycare and an annual income of $23,000 can be expected to pay over $200.00 a month for child care costs. The lack of a fair system can result in mothers who decide to enroll on social assistance because it better meets the families economic needs.

A number of issues were raised by the mothers that could be ameliorated by changes in the daycare system. Diane referred to the lack of day care spaces for children under the age of 3 years old. The incapacity of daycares to care for an ill child was mentioned by a number of mothers. This point was also raised in a 1990 report on single parents (Manitoba Advisory Council, 1990). The lack of day care options for mothers who work evenings or shift work was cited by Angie and Sue. Therefore, a number of single working mothers can be aided by a child care system that can accommodate ill children, has evening care and has spaces for children under the age of three years old.

Single working mothers of preschool children are especially vulnerable to the stresses and the dilemmas of balancing work and family responsibilities. Employers and policy makers must recognize how important it is for these mothers to have flexible workplace policies and affordable, high quality child care options. Studies have shown that the lack of such resources can have major implications for their overall well being, morale and productivity.

C) Conclusion

The support of working single mothers is a complex issue and one that involves individual

and contextual characteristics. The eco-systemic perspective acknowledges the role of the individual and the environment. The transactions which are necessary in order for an individual to master her environment need to include structural changes. Mastering the environment, or achieving integration, can only occur if conditions are conducive.

In our discussion chapter, we have seen how conditions in Canada have changed for many mothers while expectations for caring have remained the same. That is, there are more women single parenting than ever before. The continued emphasis on the private responsibility for caring has resulted in these women assuming an inordinate amount of responsibility for the economic well being of children.

Interventions for addressing the needs of single parents have tended to focus on individual change (i.e. stress management, problem solving and skill development). The eco-systemic perspective is a paradigm that accounts for the individual's ability to master the environment. It has been used in this study to also explore how environmental change can produce mastery. The findings chapter attempted to tell the story of the mothers from their perspective while the chapter on integration attempted to synthesize aspects of individual and environmental change.

Luster and Okagaki (1993) describe the process of achieving integration in their article on the multiple influences on parenting behaviour. Using the ecological perspective they surmised that

> Characteristics of the parent, of the child, and of the context in which the parent-child relationship is evolving contribute to differences among parents in their approaches to childrearing.(p227)

Luster and Okagaki (1993) describe how contextual factors, such as the workplace, can influence individual psychological and economic well being. As well, personality characteristics can influence social networks and marital relationships. They consider the combined effect of several

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factors rather than focussing on one factor in isolation. In this study, the integration chapter attempts to use an ecological approach when considering the contextual factors. The discussion chapter examines these contexts in light of the current reality of single working mothers.

There appears to be no single benefit or work arrangement that will meet the needs of all working parents. A variety of approaches are needed in the workplace are renewed efforts to ensure the availability of high quality child care. According to Mayfield (1989), an effective approach to the integration of work and family responsibilities would appear to encompass "multiple solutions to multiple problems"(p 30).

Chapter VII

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Single, working parents needed for study

University of Manitoba graduate student Wayne Harder is conducting a study on the affect of employment on family life. He is interested in knowing how your workplace supports you or could better support you as a parent. Each participant will be required to participate in a one hour interview based on a general interview guide to be used to encourage participants to share experiences that are relevant to them. Participants are assured of confidentiality and no identifying information will be published. A copy of the study results will be available on request. More and more North American employees are looking at ways to introduce policies and benefits which address the needs of working parents. Your participation in this study will aid in identifying the most helpful policies and benefits. If you are interested in volunteering or would like to know more about the study, please call Wayne at 697-9057.

WP

SINGLE WORKING PARENTS NEEDED FOR STUDY ON WORK/FAMILY ISSUES

As a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, I am conducting a study on the effect of employment on family life. If you are a single working parent of a child under the age of six years, I am interested in knowing how you balance work and family responsibilities.
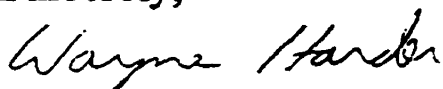
I am requesting your participation in a single one hour interview. A very general interview guide will be used to assist you in sharing relevent experiences.

As a participant you are assured of confidentiality. No identifying information will be published. A copy of the study's results will be available at your request.

More and more North American employers are looking at ways to introduce workplace policies and benefits that address the needs of working parents. Youre participation would be greatly appreciated and will contribute to the literature on this important topic.

Please contact me if you are interested in participating in the study. I am available to answer your questions or forward more information.

Sincerely,

Wayne Harder

Wayne Harder
Single Parent Work/Family Study
61 Madrill Close Wpg Man R2P OH9
(204) 697-9057

Single Parent Work/Family Study
61 Madrill Close Wpg Man R2P OH9
(204) 697-9057

Dear Parent:

Thank you for expressing interest in the single parent work/family study. Please read the following information and sign on the bottom line if you wish to participate in the study.

The study is my Master of Social Work research project and is being monitored by the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba. Dr Lyn Ferguson is my faculty advisor.

The study explores how workplace policies and benefits can better support parents. Benefits and policies can be defined as any conditions in the workplace that are currently available or are desired.

As a participant, you are requested to take part in a single one hour interview. Your identity will be kept confidential. Identifying information from the interview will not be included in the final report. The interview will be tape recorded. All audio and written recordings of the interview will be destroyed upon completion of the study (Please note that the confidentiality of information is limited by the requirements of Canadian statues).

If you agree to participate and subsequently change your mind at any time, you are free to withdraw from the study without any obligation. If you are also uncomfortable about discussing certain topic areas, you are encouraged to refrain from doing so.

When the study is completed, I would be pleased to provide you with a summary and answer any questions you might have regarding the findings.

Your participation in this study of work/family issues would be greatly appreciated and will contribute to the literature on this important topic.

_____

Sincerely,

Wayne Harder

Wayne Harder BSW

Interview Guide

Family setting

Tell me about your children? ages, personality, skills and needs. Could you tell me about other members of your family. If you would like to tell me where people live or what kind of work do they do, it would help me to understand what your family looks like.

Issues that affect parenting

Are you able to complete necessary household tasks for your family? How often do you feel rushed? What activities would you be able to undertake with your child if you had more time? Are you satisfied with the amount of time you spend with your child? Do you feel distracted by other matters when you are with your children? How often do you feel emotionally and physically tired? How is your child affected by your need to work?

Work setting

Could you describe for me your work setting? salary, duties, schedule, benefits. Could you tell me about the people you work with- supervisors, coworkers? Where is your workplace in relation to your residence and to your childs' daycare? What aspects of your work do you find most rewarding? Do you generally look forward to going to work? How often do you find work emotionally and physically tiring?

Parent's view of an ideal work setting

What aspects of your work would you most like to change? Would you be tempted to leave your current employer for any of these changes? How would these changes improve family life? Do you believe your employer should be doing more to support you as a parent?

Availability of supports and services

What kind of childcare support do you have outside the daycare? What other sources of support do you have around parenting- encouragement, social outlets, financial? Could you tell me about the daycare your child (ren) attends? How is it perceived by your child? Do you worry about your child when you are at work? Is the location suitable? Does the daycare meet your childs social, emotional and physical needs
Is it affordable?

Availability of family supportive workplace policies and benefits

Are you familiar with the variety of workplace policies and benefits that are available in other workplaces? How do you view options such as flexible work schedules, alternative work patterns (part-time, job sharing), parental leaves, sick child care or family leaves, financial assistance with childcare and workplace information and referral? Would you leave your current employer if some of these benefits were available from another employer?