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Abstract

Previous research has not addressed multiple role transitions for women; this is the purpose of this study. Women spend their days juggling multiple roles trying to do it all. Historically women's roles have been that of housewife and mother. No longer is the women's place only in the home. This research builds on the author's earlier semi-structured qualitative research inquiry, finding that many women try to do it all even when they know they are suffering physically, mentally and spiritually (Addendum A). My present work, which is heuristic in nature, discusses what I discovered during a year of journaling. The expectation is that the journal illustrates rich and robust descriptions of multiple role transitions. The most significant difference between my research study on multiple role transitions and the present study is the depth and quantity of information available for analysis from my journal entries. The study implies that self-preservation, attitude, and social support, were coping means I utilized with multiple role transitions when adding a new role as full-time student to my existing roles.

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MULTIPLE ROLE TRANSITIONS

by

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A Senior Thesis Submitted to the
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Dr. Elisabeth Schuster, Honors Advisor

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has not addressed multiple role transitions for women; this is the purpose of this study. Women spend their days juggling multiple roles trying to do it all. Historically women's roles have been that of housewife and mother. No longer is the women's place only in the home. This research builds on the author's earlier semi-structured qualitative research inquiry, finding that many women try to do it all even when they know they are suffering physically, mentally and spiritually (Addendum A). My present work, which is heuristic in nature, discusses what I discovered during a year of journaling. The expectation is that the journal illustrates rich and robust descriptions of multiple role transitions. The most significant difference between my research study on multiple role transitions and the present study is the depth and quantity of information available for analysis from my journal entries. The study implies that self-preservation, attitude, and social support, were coping means I utilized with multiple role transitions when adding a new role as full-time student to my existing roles.

Key Word: Multiple Role Transition

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My journey began fall semester of 2007 when I asked Dr. Betty Brown-Chappell, a professor in the School of Social Work at Eastern Michigan University and Social Work Honors College Advisor, what someone my age (49 at the time) needed to do to set themselves apart for prospective employers. I was concerned my age might be a detriment when interviewing. She told me any student who wanted to set himself or herself apart should consider joining the Honors College. Dr. Brown-Chappell suggested I meet with her to talk about the program. The end result of our meeting: I joined the Honors College, began a year of journaling about my life as a woman experiencing multiple role transitions, completed a qualitative study on multiple role transitions and, presented the findings at EMU's 2009 Undergraduate Symposium and produced

this senior thesis.

**Eastern Michigan University
2009 Undergraduate Symposium**



Dr. Betty Brown-Chappell, Author, Lena Ballard and my daughter, Leila

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of literature began by asking, "What does literature tell us about women occupying multiple roles during the transition of adding a new role or a change in existing roles?" To answer the question, a review of literature based on studies of women and multiple roles began. This review presents historic through contemporary discussion on women and the effects of multiple roles on women.

Historical Perspective

Can today's women have it all; can today's women do it all? Is this a realistic goal for women or simply an antiquated cliché for women with multiple roles? Have women truly come a long way or have women simply added additional roles to that of wife and mother?

If we look at the history of America, women were not considered legally equal to men until after the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified August 18, 1920, gave women the right to vote. Before this, men made the rules, men made the laws and women abided by them. Prior to the women's suffrage movement and WWI, a women's place was in the home, and although women had been given the legal vote, in many a mind they were still considered second class citizens. In 1963, Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*, wrote about the problem facing many women:

By choosing femininity over the painful growth to full identity, by never achieving the hard core self that comes not from fantasy but from mastering reality, these girls are doomed to suffer ultimately that bored, diffuse feeling of purposelessness, non-existence, non-involvement with

the world that can be called *anomie*, or lack of identity, or merely felt as the problem that had no name (p. 181).

Freidan's book brought women's feelings into the forefront, lighting a fire in the hearts of women and kindling a cultural women's movement. Unlike the two choices depicted by Freidan's earliest work, today's women are juggling multiple roles. Women are wives, mothers, friends, employees, employers, volunteers, and caregivers to the aged. The very nature of being a woman with multiple roles can be daunting.

Literature Discussion

With that in mind, the research for this study started with a simple question. What does it really mean to be a woman with multiple roles? Throughout life, an individual's roles change - whether by circumstance or choice. Transitioning from one role to another, or adding additional roles to those existing, can be life altering. For these reasons, it is important to further investigate role transitions. The goal of this study is to learn from my own experience with multiple role transitions and to provide a better understanding of the complexities of being a woman who has multiple roles and the means used to successfully navigate through such role transitions. A role transition, broadly defined, is the period of change when adding a role to existing roles or a change in existing roles (Ballard, 2008).

Previous studies revealed a myriad of possibilities of what it means to be a woman with multiple roles. Evidence was found that women with multiple roles and higher education are much more likely to have increased psychological well-

being and decreased negative affect. Additionally, a study by Chrouser Ahrens and Ryff (2006) found that multiple role involvement is a significant and positive predictor of positive relations with others, environmental mastery, positive affect and purpose in life after controlling for age, gender and education. With each role addition:

Individuals had a greater experience of effectively managing their lives and surroundings; they demonstrated more trusting, loving relationships with others; they reported a heightened sense of purpose and meaning in their lives; and they reported experiencing more positive emotions. (p. 809).

Additional areas of research were work-family fit, work-family balance, how fit is different from balance and their niche in work and family research. Clarke, Hill and Koch (2004) found that work-family fit (the demands placed on people and their efforts to meet those demands) and work-family balance (all in all how successful do you feel in balancing your work and personal/family life) seems to be two separate constructs with unique predictors. Work-family fit is significantly predicted by work hours, job satisfaction, age, total family income, marital satisfaction and household division of labor. Work-family balance is significantly predicted by job satisfaction, marital satisfaction and frequency of family activities.

Kushnir and Melamed (2006) identify two research areas of women's roles that have been neglected in the past were domestic and maternal. These facets are known to be burdensome and psychologically stressful. In order to measure the demands of these roles, a focus of the study was the relationship between home demands (housework overload, lack of time for oneself, arguments with

spouse, inadequate child care arrangements while at work, heavy physical chores, burden of caring for young children and feelings of exploitation) and perceived domestic decision control (both personal and shared dimensions of control at home were assessed by family budget, childcare, children's education, respondent's career, household management, family social activities, family leisure activities, and choice of place of residence) and their effects on the well-being of employed mothers.

Findings indicated that home demands correlated positively with burnout (burnout measure is based on a conceptualization of burnout as a syndrome that comprises emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, and cognitive weariness) and negatively with satisfaction with life (global cognitive judgments of one's life, or overall life satisfaction, using one or few general items such as the degree of satisfaction with family life, social life and leisure activities), personal control was correlated negatively with burnout and both the number of children and age of children were correlated significantly and negatively with personal control.

Rather, an unexpected finding revealed that shared control is a predictor of satisfaction with life. Thus, reinforcing other studies, for example:

The traditional psychological primacy of personal control is based on ideals of separateness and individuality, whereas the psychological approach rooted in feminist theories suggests that women's strength lies in relationships with others and that adequate adult functioning requires connection and mutuality in those relationships (Candib, 1994). Furthermore, the findings are also consistent with a new model called "tend and befriend", which suggests that stress elicits prosocial behavior, especially in women, and that this dynamic is deeply rooted in the evolution of social mammals (Taylor et al., 2000) (as cited in Kushnir & Melamed, 2006, p. 692).

A study conducted by researchers Gupta, Martire, Norton, Stephens and Townsend (2002) attempted to determine if the centrality of women's social roles changes over time. Role centrality is "the degree to which a role is a person's source of identity or self-definition" (p. S52). The researchers found a considerable change in role centrality for those in the parent-care and employee roles over the course of a year. As stress increased in the wife and employee role, there was a decrease in the centrality of these roles. One explanation suggests, "Women devalued the importance of the wife and employee roles over the course of the year, possibly as a means of coping with the increased levels of stress occurring in these two roles" (p. S60).

Furthermore, an increase in rewards in the role of parent care provider, mother, wife and employee correlated to an increase in the centrality or importance of the role. Looking at all four roles simultaneously, role reward became a greater predictor of change in centrality than a role's stress. The researchers argued, "These findings suggest that the centrality of a social role can change over time in response to stressful and rewarding role experience" (p. S59). Furthermore, "that centrality is more likely to be bolstered in the presence of rewards than to be devalued in the presence of stress" (p. S61).

The 2003 *National Women's Health Report* concluded, "stress, it seems, is playing greater havoc with our health than ever before" (p. 2). Likewise the article further recognizes:

To today's modern woman -- juggling multiple roles, coping with a sinking economy, inundated with government color alerts and the constant threat of terrorist attacks -- the idea of relaxing, of escaping for even one minute from the bone-crushing weight of stress we operate under, may seem as

difficult as achieving world peace. Add in the additional stress many women experience of living in poverty, in crime-ridden neighborhoods, and worrying about their children's safety, and the effect is like adding another 50 pounds to the constant weight of fear, worry and anxiety most women already carry (p. 2).

According to The American Psychological Association, 43 percent of adults suffer adverse health effects from stress (as cited in *Women, Chronic Stress & Resilience*, 2003, p. 2). Moreover, with work being one of the highest stressors for women, it is no wonder a government study found 60 percent of women cited stress as their number one problem at work (as cited in *Women, Chronic Stress & Resilience*, 2003, p. 2). Additionally, Susan J. Blumenthal, MD, MPA, U.S. Assistant Surgeon General and stress expert, proposes it is the “macro stressors (war & terrorism)” that compound a women’s already heavy burden (as cited in *Women, Chronic Stress & Resilience*, 2003, p. 2).

Another area affecting women is sleep. Arber and Hislop (2003) posited:

For many women in mid-life, the reality of sleep is one of disruption, with the bedroom becoming an invisible work-place in which women’s sleep needs are compromised by the unpaid physical and emotional labour necessary for the well-being and maintenance of their family (p.695).

Their research discussed several different factors of mid-life women’s sleep. These are: nature, social context, children, partners and response to sleep disruption. The nature of mid-life women’s sleep is affected by each additional role. As women’s roles increase, her chances of sleep disruption also increases. It appears that gender inequalities are a normal part of the sleep relationship between partners. Even when women need sleep, they still are care providers for their children. As part of the women’s role, they are expected to be available and

on duty at all times, creating an invisible workplace. It is still a fact that mid-life women are held responsible for household task and emotional labour. This facet of a mother's life goes unnoticed and unacknowledged. Women consider this to be just an extension of their regular day. If you are one of the few women who actually report good sleep as being normal, consider yourself lucky.

Because of gender expectations, responsibilities and overlapping roles, researchers believed sleep would be impacted during a woman's mid-life more than any other time. Added to this, women in mid-life often are dealing with physiological symptoms of menopause, re-entering the work force on a full time bases and increased responsibilities, stress and pressure, all of which can place stressors on a woman's sleep. The very nature of women may cause sleep disruption as women try to fulfill their commitments for the well-being of their families and ignore their own physical and mental health needs. For some women, disruptions to their sleep are just accepted in their social context. In concluding comments about the women in their study, Arber and Hislop (2003) stated,

The quality of their sleep is structured by the multiplicity of roles and responsibilities they carry out as part of their daily lives: as partners and/or mothers, as working women, and as the daughters of ageing parents (p. 709).

Social inequalities were explored as an important ingredient in a study by Matthews and Power (2002). It questioned if: "assessing whether social inequalities in psychological distress can be explained by work and home characteristics and the multiple roles occupied by women" (p. 800). Their findings showed that by age 23, a significant social class gradient in psychological

distress is apparent for women and this gradient remained to age 33. Findings that caused a decrease in psychological distress: (work roles) employed women had a reduce risk of psychological distress compared to non-employed women age 33 and for women with (home roles) a lower risk of psychological distress was associated with marriage. Findings that caused increased psychological distress: (work characteristics) psycho-social strains to learning and monotony caused the strongest elevation of distress, (home roles) mothers were more likely to report psychological distress, those whose partners were not employed and those with low support, job insecurity and (home characteristics) women with a young child over 6 years of age, having three or more children and handling most of the childcare. Findings that did not have an effect on psychological distress were women having an older adult (70 or >) in the home did not report elevated distress, (home roles) having sole responsibility for domestic chores, job redundancy and working unsocial hours.

In 2005, according to the U.S. Census Bureau on school enrollment in the United States: "Women made up 56 percent (about 8 million) of the undergraduate student population and 59 percent (about 2 million) of the graduate students" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). These college-aged women who plan on combining careers with marriage and children are acutely aware of the challenges they will face balancing work and family commitments. Researchers Colakoglu, Foley, Greenhaus and Weer (2006) studied the work-family conflict college-aged students expect to experience. Points of interest they found for women: maternal employment was positively related to expected

conflict and women expected more conflict than men did and held lower career aspirations and status orientations than men. Students in their sample did not plan to restrict their career aspirations or place less importance on their careers, even though they expected high levels of conflict.

The review of literature explored many different avenues for women with multiple roles from historic through contemporary. The literature ranged from mid-life woman's sleep patterns to career aspirations for young college women. Gender played a significant role as women who have multiple roles can be positively or negatively impacted by education, balancing family and work, a change in the importance of roles, and even their expectations as possible future mothers. However, one exception not thoroughly discussed was role transitions for women with multiple roles.

Role transitions can be exciting and exhilarating while simultaneously producing anxiety and frustration. The present study seeks to expand on the author's earlier semi-structure qualitative research through examination of her own multiple roles, her current role transitions of full-time student and its impact on her life.

METHODOLOGY

To gain insight and explore multiple role transitions, a journal was used to record data for my qualitative method of analysis. Over the course of one academic year I attempted to make journal entries on a daily basis. This method yielded personal information, insights and experiences for data analysis. Once I determined the roles being discussed, the coping skills being utilized and the

impact of multiple role transitions on my life, I assigned codes for each sub-category within these categories.

Participant

I am a 51-year-old woman from southeastern Michigan, an area called “downriver” near Detroit, Michigan. I am married with two teenage children; a full-time Social Work student in the Honors College at Eastern Michigan University, school boards trustee in the Flat Rock School District and a homemaker.

Data Collection

I kept a journal regarding my multiple roles throughout one academic year. Journal entries are from September 2007 through August 2008 during which time I recorded 175 entries. Each journal entry contains one or more days of personal information pertaining to my multiple roles of mother, wife, homemaker (e.g. grocery shopping, laundry, cooking, cleaning, community volunteering), full-time student, school board trustee, friend, extended family member (e.g. sister, brother, aunt, sister-in-law) or family member (myself, husband, children).

Analysis Process

To achieve the goal of this study, I used concepts derived from my previous work on multiple role transitions (Ballard, 2008) that studied ten women with multiple roles between the ages of 35 and 55 years of age. Three main concepts or themes emerged from this earlier work; women occupy multiple roles; women handle multiple role transitions; these phenomena impact their lives. The earlier study is found in the addendum.

For ease of cross-reference for the present study, journal entries were broken down by paragraph. A total of 292 paragraphs were coded with a date and paragraph number (i.e. 12/16/07P1, 12/16/07P2).

The three inserted concepts derived from the qualitative research completed on multiple role transitions were then embedded into each sentence of the journal: identification of multiple roles, handling multiple role transitions, and the, impact of occupying multiple roles on my life. Sentences that fit the above concepts were written on separate index cards. Using cards gave me mobility when working with the data; I was not dependent on a computer and could better visualize and rearrange the groups. The index cards were grouped by concepts and compiled by themes that naturally emerged from the data.

Once this task was completed, index cards were sorted into core categories. The following core categories emerged from the data: multiple roles occupied, coping skills for multiple roles, and negative impact of competing roles. These core categories broke down into several sub-categories. Multiple roles occupied: student, mother, homemaker, wife, school board trustee, family, friend and extended family. Coping skills for multiple roles: reason, attitude, organization, social support, meaning and self-preservation. Negative impact of competing roles: physical and emotional.

For purpose of clarity, below is an extracted paragraph journal entry from September 27, 2009 follows:

Sitting down to write today, I ask myself is it really only Friday? It seems at least a week since I've been in Dr. Brown's office. Today, I seem full of energy. I've checked my History Online class. Made dinner for my husband the kids will eat pizza at school tonight) and have been cleaning

the baseboards and sweeping the couches and cobwebs in the corners. There are times like this that cleaning is actually therapeutic. Cleaning is not one of my favorite things to do. Luckily I have two children that help out for basic things like sweeping and dusting, dishes, garbage etc. But it's 9:00a.m. and I'm ahead of the game. As I was cleaning, I was thinking about tonight. Tonight is the homecoming parade in our district. I am not super comfortable being in the parade. But it is fun to throw candy to the children. The hardest part is knowing there are people out there who dislike me, even hate me, due to decisions I have made as a board member in our schools.... That has been the hardest part to deal with. When I first started three years ago, I was devastated by the behavior of some. It took awhile for me to learn that I cannot control their opinion of me. I can only do what I feel is right, make informed choices and go forward.

The example depicts my discussion on the multiple roles of student, mother, homemaker, wife and school board trustee, the coping skills I used of attitude, organization, social support and meaning; the negative emotional impact the role of school board trustee can have.

An unexpected theme emerged that was not relevant to the above categories. This can best be described as realizations about how high my personal expectations for myself are, and how difficult they are to achieve. I recognized repeat patterns of pushing myself too hard to be exceptional in all of the roles I occupy. A paragraph journal entry from October 25, 2007 is shown to reinforce the above finding:

It seems that my journal writing is getting further and further apart. When I first started classes it was easy to keep up every couple of days. But as the fall term has progressed it becomes harder and harder. I've had a bug for over a week. This has drained me of my positive energy. I love school. But it is difficult with all of the other responsibilities I have. I think that I am learning about my own limitations this year. I have learned about them before, but this time I am recognizing the symptoms and plan on addressing them. I think it is important to remember that when we are run down our worst fears can haunt us. Fear that maybe I have bit off more than I can chew. *But I've been a full time student before and know that I stress myself over every point. Still, I made it through before. I think that*

when I start feeling this way, I must step back and take a break. Maybe not worry about every extra credit point. I have a goal to get all A's. Is that so important in the scheme of things? Or is it more important to enjoy the journey. Yep. I think that's it.

This day, I was frustrated because my journal entries were further apart than I had wanted. It seemed when the fall semester started rolling; it became harder to make time for journaling. I wasn't feeling particularly well which drained my positive energy. On a day such as this, I ask myself, why am I trying to do so much? What am I trying to prove? Why did I join the Honors College on top of being a full-time student? It's because I love school, I love learning and I love being surrounded by people who are passionate about their own personal growth as well as that of others.

Coding of categories and sub-categories were checked several times to ensure the quality of data collected. Additionally, Dr. Betty Brown-Chappell provided oversight and second reader review to eliminate potential researcher bias.

RESULTS

As a prequel to discussion, figures 3 – 5 highlight the results by core category and sub-category. Figure 3 depicts the percent each role is mentioned in the paragraph journal entries. Multiple roles mentioned from most to least in order: mother, student, homemaker, wife, friend, extended family, school board

trustee and family.

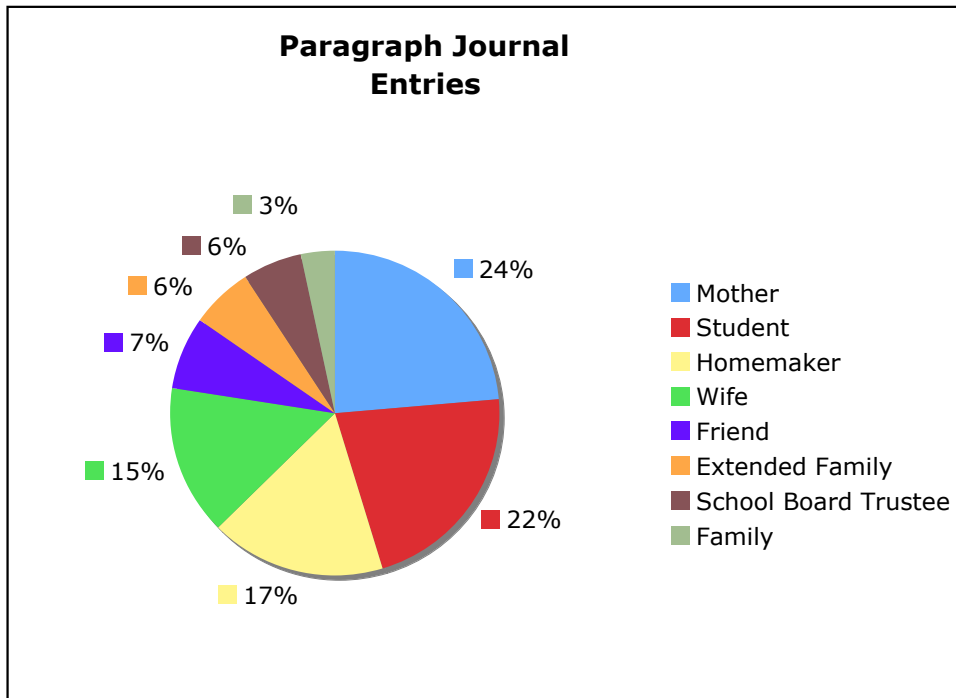


Figure 3 Paragraph Journal Entries Multiple Roles

The following paragraph journal entry from April 17, 2008 demonstrates how some days I switch from one role to another. On this day I mention six out of the eight multiple roles I occupy.

Dropped the neighbor girl at school. Spent the morning in the library and then at the Social Work building. It was an easy morning. We had presentations in class. For our agency visit presentation, Dr. Nybell brought pizza. We all gobbled it down. Leila was home sick. I hate being away when she is sick. I called twenty times. After school I met with the superintendent. We had a lot to discuss. We are on track in our goals for the students. After which, I came home for a bit then took Leila, to volleyball. Came back home and worked on my paper. I made dinner. I don't remember what. David and I visited and talked with Evan. He is so excited about his ACT. By evening, we all watched Survivor together and talked about stuff. We share many moments talking about things as a family.

It is evident from results of roles occupied that the journal entries refer mainly to my home roles of mother, wife, homemaker and family. Though

tabulated individually as seen in figure 3 these roles combined to emphasize the importance I place on these areas, which are mentioned almost sixty percent of the time.

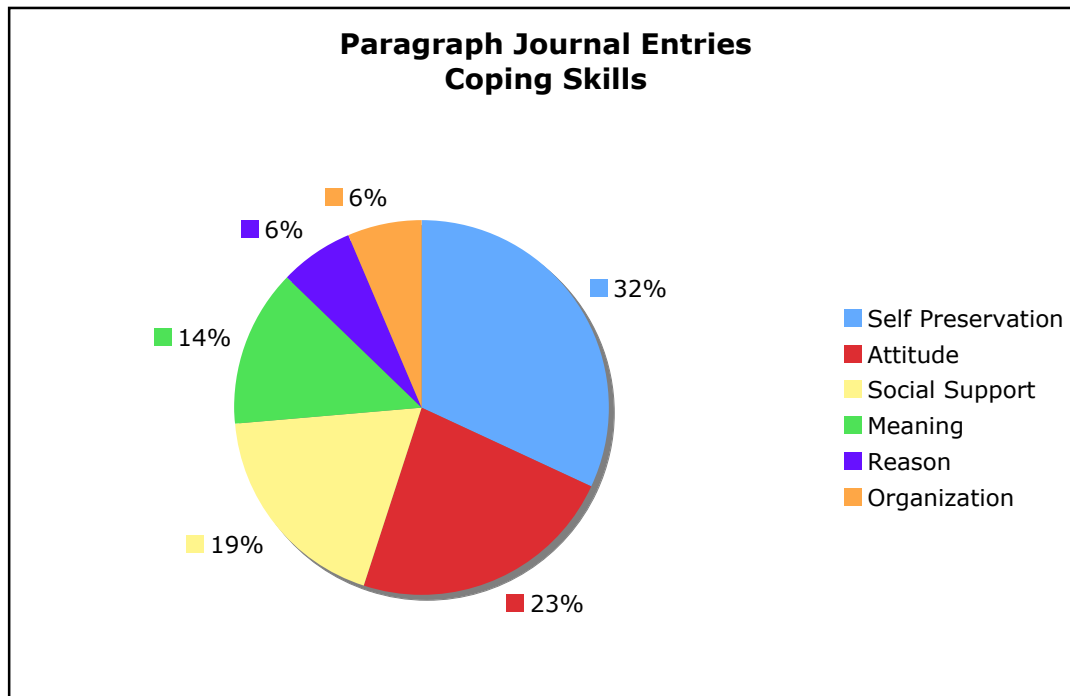


Figure 4 Paragraph Journal Entries Coping Skills

Figure 4 shows the breakdown of coping skills mentioned in my daily life from most to least: self preservation, attitude, social support, meaning, reason and organization.

Self-Preservation

Self-preservation is demonstrated by the variety of ways I cope: time to walk quietly, handling every day chores at my leisure (therapeutic), relax (down time alone), treat myself once in a while - take time to go get my hair done, take time to watch a movie or TV show, nap, eat comfort food, sometimes I mix errands with pleasure (go with a friend), play games (text twist, bookworm), enjoy

my family (sometimes just being in the same room while doing homework), relax with husband, spend leisure time with children or family, taking time to enjoy holiday baking, remind myself to slow down, visit with a friend, laugh, reach out to others when I need help, try to let go and accept my limitations. At times you have to be selfish and do what's best for you, vent, being excited for my husband or children when something good happens for them, trying to stay in the moment and not worry, stopping and taking a deep breath, taking time to pray and center myself, there are times I need to take the easy way out, such as picking up fast food. I chose the following paragraph journal entry to exhibit how I used self-preservation as a coping skill, since it has several examples:

Sunday, April 20, 2008, Leila and I went to church, I came home and did homework. David worked all day. I spent the evening with my family and ate chocolate. It was great! Went for a walk and relaxed some.

Attitude

Attitude also plays an important part in my daily coping skills: look forward to my children's events, appreciate what others add to my life, think positively in all roles, laugh when I can, enjoy school, take pleasure in a compliment, reminding myself to enjoy the journey, recognizing personal growth, positive realizations about self, in all things give thanks and count my blessings, surround myself with positive people, take pleasure in the fun things, love the ones you're with (appreciate time with those you value), even when going out of yourself for another is a chore, take pleasure in it.

The following paragraph journal entry on March 29, 2008 depicts how I used attitude as a coping skill:

I spent the whole morning studying for my AAS final. I was very anxious because it can make or break you. I did ok, I got a B...but I spent the evening dancing around because I am finished with the class and got an A. The exam was tough. I don't think if I had studying any harder I would have done better. There is so much information and it was not just on our learning reports. YEA! YEA! YEA! I cleaned and then David came home from work and we cleaned up and went out to dinner. Dinner was nice. This is the second time we have gone out to dinner without one of the kids. It is so odd. Evan was working and Leila had a friend over and she wanted to stay home and hang with her friend. We went to Meijers together. It was cool. I love having someone with me, but I tend to rush a little since David is not big on shopping.

I can still remember being so excited about getting an A in a class. I was jumping around and shouting out "YEA!" the night before and still doing it on this day. I had worked so hard on this class. I was concerned because my ability to memorize an abundance of facts is just not the same anymore. Luckily, I had an A going into the final and the final did not carry the same weight as the other assignments.

I always enjoy time with my husband, we are beginning a new phase in our life, as the children get older and spend less and less time with us. After going out to dinner without the children, which seemed odd, we went grocery shopping together. It is always nice to have company when I'm doing run of the mill activities. All in all, it was a great day.

It is experiences like the one above that keep me motivated to continue working hard, especially during the rough times. Doing my best and going the extra mile ultimately paid off both academically and emotionally.

Social Support

Social support came in many forms: children help out with errands and at home, children are independent, children are intuitive (emotionally supportive) and able to recognize when I am fragile, eldest really helps by running his sister to and fro, have assigned tasks (family), husband is emotionally supportive, at times I took the easy way out and David made decisions (let go with children), husband physically helps also (stuff around the house), husband is someone I can talk too, leaned on family, husband and I balance our family life (our roles within our home life and with the children are interchangeable – be flexible), husband's role with the children is immeasurable, together we make it work (team), love from my family, rely on my sister, extended family and friends are supportive, nurturing school environment at EMU, my son who is the oldest shouldered extra responsibilities.

I realize that without the support of those I love, of people I respect, the kindness of a stranger or my faith in a higher power, I would not be where I am now. In the past couple of years I have come to rely on my husband and children more heavily than ever. My husband has financially carried the burden for our family for many years. My husband and children have continually encouraged my educational growth and commitment to our community.

My sister has been a touchstone in my life. We talk weekly, many times I have called her for advice about a given situation or because I need someone to just listen, without judgment. I count on her more than she knows.

I have three brothers, there is comfort in knowing I could call any one of them if I needed help. Of the three, my eldest brother provides a different kind of

support, we have a special bond that was established when I was a child. He was my biggest cheerleader and mentor when I was growing up.

I have two friends I can call on when I need spiritual support. These women call themselves prayer warriors (people who spend time and energy in prayer for others). There are times, I may call and ask one of them or both to keep me, someone I love or know in their prayers. Along with other trusted friends I hold dear, are people I respect and love spending time with. I would be remiss to not mention how fortunate I am to have a cousin, who wears many hats herself, give of herself by taking time to review my original work and make suggestions.

Many times the kindness of a stranger is sufficient to lift my spirits at just the right moment. Above all, daily, I pray, for grace and guidance to handle whatever comes my way. In faith, I am where I should be at this place in time.

I chose the following paragraph journal entry from February 3, 2008 to illustrate the social support I received from my sister and husband:

I was exhausted this morning; I woke up early with aching bones. I just didn't seem to have any energy. I felt guilty about not taking my daughter to church and guilty about not feeling like taking her to get new court shoes for basketball. I tend to do that a lot. Feel guilty about not doing something for someone. When talking to my older sister, she said why not ask David to do it? My husband wasn't doing anything. I hated to ask after he worked all week. I wished he had offered. So I asked him and he said no problem.

On this particular day, I was exhausted and feeling guilty about not taking my daughter to church and buying her basketball shoes. I was hoping my husband would read my mind and just offer to take her shopping, he didn't. I called my sister to talk. She asked why I didn't just ask my husband to take her. I

didn't want to bother him; he had been working a lot. After talking to my sister, I asked my husband if he would take our daughter for shoes, and he did. It was as simple as that, just asking for help. Because I was exhausted, I could not do what I needed to do, which in turn made me feel guilty and ultimately led me to call my sister to vent. Her advice led me to ask my husband for help.

Significance

Finding meaning, both positive and negative, in my daily life became another coping skill I used: be true to myself when making decisions, take time to think things through, knowing what is really important in my life family, friends and faith are key, I need to stay focused on my goals. Speaking up for myself keeps me in an emotionally healthy place in my life, work at taking one day at a time, some days are just easier than others (it's like having a mini break and at times I don't even realize it), at times when I am not well, realize I just can't do it all, at times I have to force myself to get things done, just do it, at times you have to just say no, at times I just get through the day, accept non-perfection, understanding the socialization of women, my childhood and its impact on present, I have a desire to do it all, accepting things I cannot change, transition is a gradual process, realization that I am moving into a different phase of my life continually, in relationships.

Wanting to convey the meaning I learn from my experiences and from keeping a journal, I chose the following paragraph journal entry I wrote on November 11, 2007, to share:

Wow, what a difference a week makes. I can't believe how much better I feel physically and emotionally. I had some kind of bug for over a week that really brought me down. I put myself under too much pressure and it caught up with me. One thing I learned this week was, there are times we really just need to reach out and tell someone, "I am having a rough time." That's just what I did I called a couple of friends and said, "I feel like crap. I got some positive reinforcement, which really helped. Whenever I am tired my old anxieties creep back and I have to tell myself new messages. We are such creatures of habit. There are times we cannot do it all. Last week was the first week I did not do extra credit for Dr. BBC's class. I just didn't have the energy. Believe it or not striving for perfection will kill you.

Journaling over the course of a year gave me insight into my habits. I found myself time and time again repeating old habits, both healthy and unhealthy. Inevitably the habits that are not healthy bring me down. In this example, I have over done it once again, trying to do it all and find myself feeling anxious and out of sorts, as before, I realize once again, that I am a creature of habit.

Reasons

Reasons used as coping skills for multiple roles: helping other women (the idea) is a goal I have, sharing with family and others my experiences, excited about being an honor student, excited about classes, feeling good about the integrity I bring to my role as a school board member, helping others excites me – desire to make a difference, doing what is really important to me, I know what is really important in my life: family, friends, faith.

I chose the next paragraph journal entry to portray just how much the reasons I use for coping skills impact my life:

So here it is Wednesday, December 12, 2007, and I'm in the nesting mode. Yesterday, I baked biscotti, cranberry bars, made fudge and dinner and whipped up a batch of cookie dough. Then I cut out all my coupons

and spent the night going thru paper work until 1:00 am. I was so far behind on everything this year. School really takes a lot out of my normal stuff. Being a mom and wife is the best part of my life. I get such love from my family. I've met some super people at school and have truly enjoyed my life... even if I am a space head some of the time.

Organization

Organization coping skills I utilized: plan ahead and schedule for self and family (helps to physically see it – calendar), planning out school work, use time wisely, be prepared, prioritize, get a head start on the next day if you can, go the extra mile (pays back tenfold), try to not get behind, be informed, making a plan is not enough...look at it, be proactive.

One of the things I do for myself is be as organized as possible. With that being said, no matter how much time and effort I spend on planning, there are times something important takes precedence over previous commitments. For me, getting good grades is really important but even more important is giving my support to loved ones.

The sample paragraph journal entry on November 15, 2007, shows how I use organization as a coping skill:

For me, it is hard to miss a class. What really matters, is getting the A, but taking care of us and being there for others is more important than an A! For me, I had to miss my classes. That was the choice I made. Be proactive! I made sure I talked to all my professors. Though I missed the material. It was important to let them know why. Maybe I worry too much about what others think of me. I guess that depends on who the others are. This week something really neat happened to me. A professor I admire really liked a paper I wrote. That mean's a lot to me. I needed that boost at just that time. I went to bed with a smile on my face.

At this time, someone I loved dearly had passed away. The funeral was the same time as a class I was taking. I hate missing class, when I miss class it

seems I lose out on information I need. I made sure I took the time to get in contact with my professors ahead of time and let them know why I was unable to attend class. Along with finding what if anything needed to be done for the next class.

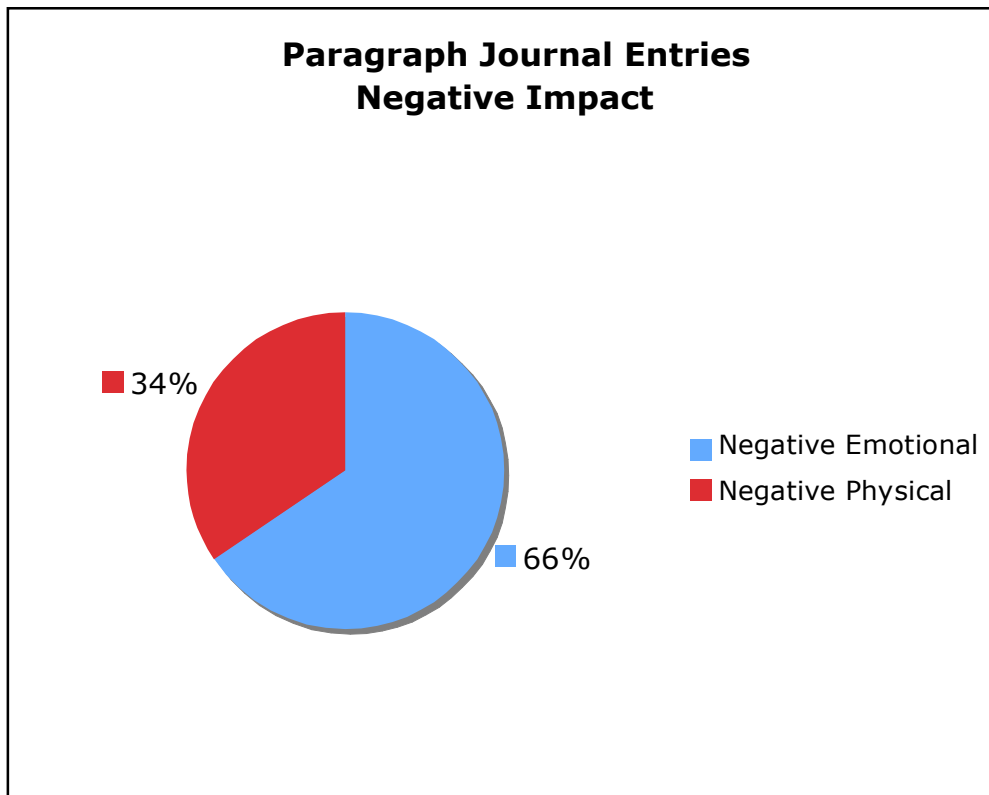


Figure 5 Paragraph Journal Entries Negative Impact

Figure 5 represents the percent of negative emotional and negative physical impact multiple role transitions affect my life. The findings indicate that negative emotions impact my life almost double those of negative physical impact.

Negative Emotional Impact

Negative emotional impact is evident: guilt about taking away from my family when I'm at school or school board, guilt about not being home with my daughter when she is sick, guilt for missing the children's activities due to other roles, guilt for missing children's band concert...just too tired, guilt about the money taken away from the family for the expense of school, guilt about not making dinner when my husband has worked long days and weeks, guilt about spending money on self since attending college is costly, guilt about not having enough energy to take my daughter to church or to get basketball shoes, worry about daughter coming home to an empty house (daughter age 13 at the time), worry about doing well at school, stress brought on by worry, stress is affecting me physically (e.g. achy back and neck), worry about the economy, stressed when I can't seem to mentally connect with people, get frustrated easily when I'm stressed, sadness about the loss of people I knew (regret that I hadn't made time to see them), loss of confidence, loss of motivation, feeling scattered or overwhelmed, frustrated by the sexism of some men, frustrated when others don't do their part.

This paragraph journal entry dated April, 1, 200, illustrates how I worry at times, negatively impacting my emotions:

I know that I have become complacent in our finances. I realize I don't want to and can't do it all. Though David was only away for a few days. It was odd. It was hard to think of being a single parent if something happened to him. Again, daily I don't think about things that others might have to. Such as, investing for retirement. David worked until late yesterday. The company he works for has cut back staff due to a slow down in business. Therefore, he and others have to take on more and more work. At times the extra work is rough on him. I feel bad it has been like this for a long time. I know he is stressed.

I remember David was flying to England for work, not a common occurrence. I started on the downward spiral of what ifs? What if something happened to David during his flight to or from England? What would that mean for my and the children's lives?

Also, over the last several years, with the auto industry struggling, my husband's employment has been unpredictable. I have been concerned for my husband due to the amount of stress he is under at work. I worry for his physical and mental well-being. Like others from Michigan, this period of our lives has caused more anxiety than I can remember.

Negative Physical Impact

Negative physical impact became apparent: drained of positive energy, stressed, anxious, exhausted, tired, body aches, not sleeping well, restless, takes a lot of energy to do normal tasks, no motivation at times, forgetful.

The paragraph journal entry on May 11, 2008, reveals the negative physical impact of my multiple roles:

Sunday...Mothers Day. Well it was a rainy dull day outside. I did not go to church, I was tired and Leila needed to get clothes for her trip...she outgrew all of her clothes from last summer. We spent the morning at the mall. We had a good time together. David went to work and Evan relaxed in the morning. Evan spent the day working on schoolwork and housework. I was really tired so Leila and I came home earlier than I planned. My brother, friend and sister called me to wish me a happy Mother's Day. Leila bought me a cone at McDonalds. David and I do not buy gifts for most occasions. We get what we need when we need it. Leila did her chores and worked on school stuff too.

I was really tired and had no energy. I really had to dig deep to take my daughter to the mall for clothes. I was even more exhausted when we came

home. Both of the children helped with housework, making my life a little easier. There are times, no matter how tired I am, that I still have things that must be done. Whenever I am stressed my sleep is disrupted. I either can't fall asleep or wake up several times during the evening. Being a mother too, causes sleep disruption. I never truly rest until I know my son or daughter is in a safe place. I also wake with night sweats due to menopause. All or any of these leave me feeling exhausted; falling more easily into old patterns of self-doubt, worry or higher anxiety.

Throughout the process of coding and analysis, I kept memos on insights that seemed to develop a clearer picture the impact of multiple role transitions has on my life and others. Examples of insights that revolve around my multiple roles: at times the whole family is stressed which causes conflict, at times my family and I are all going in different directions, role disparity: fall behind in one role due to the demands of the other roles, I sometimes want a family member to offer help without my asking, roles cross over when you're a team, at times you sacrifice in one area to accomplish something else, trying to do special things when exhausted take away from it, at times we don't see the forest from the trees, rely on those we respect, so wrapped up in busy lives we miss out on things, others around me have multiple roles also, others are just as exhausted, others stress about their lives too, everyone has their own multiple roles to cope with, growth brings a positive aspect to multiple role transitions which makes it easier to move through trying times, transitions are happening all the time, age plays a factor on my body which can ultimately affect my emotions, at times

others see your full potential when you can't, journaling brings to the surface habits and realizations about one's self, the same people who provide social support can cause negative emotions.

To give the reader an accurate representation of how the categories and sub-categories were defined, I have included as much information for each as possible.

DISCUSSION

My previous study on women who have experienced multiple role transitions brought to light how the participants identified their roles, which they defined as: wives, mothers, employees, business owners, volunteers, friends, daughters, sisters, prayer warriors (those who spend time in prayer for others), homemakers, full or part time students, children of god, daughter-in-laws, sister-in-laws, significant others, ex-wife's and caregivers all simultaneously. Past studies say very little about the experiences of women with multiple roles when transitioning into a new role or a change in existing roles. The main endeavor of this study is to draw on my previous study of multiple role transitions and learn from my own experiences, in the hope of better understanding what it really means to be a woman experiencing multiple role transitions. Answers are sought on which multiple roles I discussed, how I handled multiple role transitions and what the impact of occupying multiple roles has on my life.

As previously stated, findings showed that almost sixty percent of the time I discussed home roles of mother, wife, homemaker and family with my role as full-time student being the next highest at twenty-two percent. In analysis, figure

3 reflects the amount of time and energy I give to my roles. Figure 3 does not show how I personally prioritize my roles. In daily life, I prioritize my roles in the following order: home, school board trustee, student, extended family and friends. Other than my home roles, these other roles are not set in concrete; however, prioritization is needed to accomplish all of my responsibilities.

As seen in figure 4, which demonstrates the break down of coping skills used in handling multiple role transitions: thirty-two percent self-preservation, twenty-three percent attitude, nineteen percent social support, fourteen percent meaning, and reason and organization both at six percent. As I reflect on each category and how they mesh together either simultaneously, sub-consciously, consciously or a variation of one or more combined, I realize that at some point every one of these coping skills is crucial in value. Also, there is no way to assign a weight to a given coping skill.

Without some semblance of organization, my life would be chaos. Using organization as a coping skill, I plan and schedule out my time for each role. I try to work appointments; meetings and classes around my family so I can be with them as much as possible.



Our Family

Some days my social support and attitude are all that keeps me going. Knowing that I have the love, support and encouragement of my husband and children or at anytime I can call my sister or a friend because I need to talk provides solace.

This is an effective tool I use in keeping a positive attitude. I learned how effective it is back in the early eighties. Maxwell Maltz, author of the book, *Psycho-Cybernetics*, proposed that, “happiness, is a mental habit, a mental attitude and if it is not learned and practiced in the present it is never experienced” (p. 98). One exercise he recommends as a way to acquire the habit

of happiness is to: “practice smiling at least three times during the day” (p. 110). To this day, if I am feeling blue, I practice smiling, which inevitably makes me laugh.

It seems poignant, the meanings I use as a coping skill can complement each other while at the same time be at odds. For example, learning I just can't do it all while realizing that I can. Yet at the same time the reasons I use coping skills bring purpose and fulfillment to my life. The reasons are my passions: helping others, learning, being a school board trustee, extended family, faith, friends and most of all, my husband and children.

As I reflect on the coping skill of self-preservation, I am surprised by the results. Most days it seems I have no time for myself and that I am rushing through the day from place to place and role to role. This finding brings to the surface that I use this coping skill more than I believed I did.

The negative impact multiple role transitions have on my life as shown in figure 5 is tabulated into two sub-categories: negative physical impact and negative emotional impact. Negative emotional impact is mentioned sixty-six percent of the time and negative physical impact is mentioned thirty-four percent of the time. It came as no surprise the degree to which negative emotional impact affects my life and that of my family. At times it seems like a vicious cycle. Guilt, worry and frustration bring on stress, stress in turn is further impacted by my emotions and spurred on by an impact of it's own. Such as, a loss of confidence in myself, lack of motivation, anger and feeling overwhelmed.

It seems too that negative emotional impact and negative physical impact

go hand in hand. Negative emotional impact caused many physical side effects like anxiety, stress, exhaustion, restlessness and loss of sleep. Additionally, there are times when being physically ill or experiencing symptoms of menopause drain my energy. After, I began stressing about what did, or not, get done (e.g. cooking, cleaning, school work, missing one of my children's events). The main theme that kept resurfacing as I coded my paragraph journal entries is that I am a creature of habit. I found myself continually following the same habits, which ultimately would lead to the same results. Paragraph journal entry 10/2/07P2 expresses this theme:

For me, the hardest part of school is always the beginning of the semester. I look at all I have to do and get so overwhelmed. I do it every time. We are creatures of habit. Once I get a couple of weeks into the semester and see what I really need to do and have scheduled my time, it is much easier.

LIMITATIONS

Since the current study is grounded in themes from my previous study on multiple role transitions, I have included the limitations of the previous study as well. This study is limited by several factors. First, the scope of this study and the previous study was small with only ten women participants and myself. Also, the participants in the previous study were selected from my personal and professional acquaintances. This may have tainted either study by biases on my part in that I may have knowingly or unknowingly chosen participants or data with specific results in mind. Another limitation is that neither study had socio-economic or ethnic requirements. The frame of reference is limited by race since all of the women participants including myself are Caucasian. In the previous

study a participant's husband decided to come in and listen to us. Luckily it was more toward the end of the interview, as it appeared to hinder her from speaking freely. The study is further limited since it only revolves around my life experiences. All of the above limitations may potentially limit the generalizability of the findings.

CONCLUSIONS

The impression today is that women can do it all. Often, I have been asked how do you do it all? How do I juggle being a mother, wife, homemaker, school board trustee, full-time student, extended family member and friend? As the results of this study have shown, at times, not very well. The transition of adding the role of full-time student to existing roles has negatively impacted me both emotionally and physically.

When reviewing my journal for this paper, it seemed that I was continually feeling stressed and reminding myself to slow down. This frustrated me even more, wondering if I will ever change my habits. Interestingly, on the day I was going over my journal again, I was feeling stressed and anxious. I realized I was thinking of all the things I needed to accomplish in the next couple of weeks and summer months. My son's high school graduation party for over 150 guests and all that entails from cooking to cleaning and shopping, my senior thesis, my field hours, an elective for the masters program and finishing my BSW classes. Top it off with school board issues that started a couple of weeks prior, the emotions of my son getting ready to leave for college, the worry about my husband's job and my daughter breaking her arm, I was at my limit. As I read, I realized the answers

in how to handle my stress were in my journal: Stop and take a deep breath, plan out my schedule instead of worrying about it, take time for myself or call a friend. Many times just calling my sister or a dear friend is all it takes for me to get myself in a healthy frame of mind.

Existing roles change all the time. For example, as I thought about my son's upcoming High School graduation I realized, once again, my role as mother and how I identify as being a mother is changing. The end of the summer, my son Evan will be going off to college. Gone will be the mornings of making sure he is up, asking if he packed his lunch, making doctor appointments for him, asking how was his day at school or waiting for him to come home at night before I can fall asleep. Like my role as mother, my identity too is changing...my life roles are transitioning. For me, this is not only a physical change brought on by my son's leaving, but also an emotional challenge of letting go.

The coping skills of self-preservation, attitude, social support, meaning, reason and organization have empowered me to fulfill the goals I have for my family and myself. I believe having the luxury of choice makes all the difference in the world. I chose to be a wife, mother, homemaker, school board trustee, student, extended family member and friend. I love each one of the roles I occupy for different reason. Even though at times, it seems that keeping my head above water is all I can do, these roles bring with them much more joy and self-satisfaction than I had ever dreamed possible.

My journey of returning to school to further my education began as a desire to spend my time making a difference, as well as a need for personal

growth. Even though it has been all consuming at times, in my heart I have always known if I could get through it, the personal satisfaction would be immeasurable, and that has proven to be true. This study has provided a lens from which I have viewed my own multiple role transitions, and for that, I am truly thankful.

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ADDENDUM

Multiple Role Transitions Qualitative Research

Method

Participants

Ten women from the downriver area of Detroit, Michigan participated in this qualitative study of multiple roles. The women ranged in age from 35-55 years, with an average age of 43. Seven of the participants were married and the other three were divorced at the time of the study. All of the participants are mothers with an average 2.8 dependent children living under their care. The average age of the children is 12.25 years. In addition to providing care for their dependent children, the majority of the women worked either full-time (n=4) or part-time (n=3). These women simultaneously occupied from 3 to 8 different roles (e.g. wife, mother, employee, business owner, volunteer, friend, daughter, sister, prayer warrior, homemaker, full or part time student, child of god, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, significant other, ex-wife and caregiver). All of the participants reported having experienced multiple role transitions in their lives.

Data Collection

All data collected for this study was treated as confidential and no identifying information was connected to the responses of participants. All participants in the study voluntarily agreed to participate after being informed both orally and in writing about the purpose of the study. Each participant signed an informed consent form. In addition, the participants were given the opportunity

to choose the location and time for the interview. The reason for this was two-fold: it gave the women flexibility to work around their already demanding schedules and freedom to answer the interviewer's questions where they were most at ease.

To achieve the goal of the study, a semi-structured technique was used to interview participants. The length of the interviews ranged from a ½ hour to 1 hour. Of the 10 participants, 8 chose to be interviewed in their homes and the other 2 were interviewed at the interviewers home. Each interview was auto-taped and transcribed verbatim. Audiotapes were kept in a safe until the study was complete, then destroyed.

Data was collected using the frame elicitation technique. The frame elicitation technique is used to ask or pose questions in such a way that the researcher can find out from the research participants what they include in a particular topic or category; participants were asked the following seven questions:

- What life/role transitions have you experienced?
- Thinking about your last life/role transition, in what ways did your roles change during that period?
- What was the impact of your of your life/role transition on the way you manage your life?
- What was the impact of your life/role transition on your expectations of other people?
- What is the nature of social support that you used during that transition?

- Can you give me an example of how you have used your social support systems during that life/role transition?
- What advice would you give other women going through similar life/role transitions?

Analysis Process

In order to truly reflect the data collected in interviews and the sentiments of the participants; a process of allowing the categories to emerge from the data in the interview was used. These categories are called indigenous categories, which are constructed from the data collected in interview. After interviews were transcribed, transcripts were read through noting themes, patterns, similarities and differences. All transcripts were compiled by question, theme and sub-theme for each participant. Transcripts were reread several times to ensure accurate identification of themes and sub-themes. Also, a journal of researcher comments was kept while reviewing transcripts for use in the study.

Results & Discussion

Women experience many role transitions in their lives. Today's women are wives, mothers, employees, business owners, volunteers, friend, daughters, sisters, prayer warriors, homemakers, full or part time students, children of god, daughter-in-laws, sister-in-laws, significant others, ex-wife's and caregivers all simultaneously. Past studies say very little about the experiences of women with multiple roles when transitioning into a new role. The main endeavor of the present study is to learn from women's experiences with multiple role transitions. Answers are sought on how role transitions impact women and their

management of life, impact women's expectations of other people, the nature of social support women receive, how women use social support systems and what advice participants can share with other women in similar situations.

For most of the women in the study, making time for an interview was difficult. Some of the women are so busy that the interview had to be squeezed in. Some participants preferred to be interviewed in their homes and others outside the home. Being interviewed and asked to talk about their lives was a cathartic experience for some of the women. Several women had tears in their eyes or choked up as they discussed the difficulty of having multiple roles. It was obvious how tired, stressed and clearly fragile some participants were. In contrast, those participants that were not in the middle of transition or feeling overwhelmed were quite matter of fact. Not all transitions were hard. For one participant, introducing a new partner into her and her children's life eased some of the burdens of doing it all alone. For another, her recent divorce had no affect at all on her other roles.

It was tragic that many of the women felt like they had lost their identities when they became so engrossed in trying to fulfill all of their roles and be everything to everybody at the same time. As one employed, married, mother of one, who is caregiver to a parent participant so succinctly, put it, "Most of the time I feel like I'm being yanked all over. I'm being pulled from every direction that I can be pulled from." Many put their desires and dreams on hold for the sake of the children. Above all, these women are mothers first. Their duty to their children is above all else, even to their own detriment.

For some being caregiver to a mother has been the most difficult. Not in the physical care, but in the loss of feeling like a daughter. No longer are they daughters but they became mothers to their mothers. There is sadness in that loss, for some, they mourn being the daughter of their mother. Above all, these caregivers of mothers would have it no other way. No matter how stressful it is on them and their families.

Because of the nature of the questions, themes naturally emerged from the data collected: how participants were personally affected (e.g. guilt, stress, frustration, feelings of inadequacy, overwhelmed), how the family was impacted (e.g. children struggled, husbands roles changed, the eldest child was put upon), time management (e.g. household chores, running the children, shopping), expectations (e.g. themselves, others) and realizations (e. g. life, family and friends). Patterns also emerged, such as, women going back to work out of necessity, women being thrust into the role of caregiver for a mother, women feeling inadequate or guilty about not being able to be home for their children or not getting all the things done at home they want, always putting their mother role first and feelings of lost identity. One participant with multiple roles discussed how she felt about her life:

Your role for everybody else becomes more important than yourself. I find a lot of time and you look at yourself and you don't even know who you are anymore. What happened to that funny laughter, the funny person that you used to be, you know, carefree and not really worrying about all this stuff? That person is gone and it's kind of sad some days.

The majority of the women are constantly juggling their roles. For these women, after role transition, the prioritization of roles only shifted; which added more stress to their lives. Following are the results from the interviews with the ten participants. The participants were asked seven-research questions. Answers to the questions often crossed over into the following question. The results are organized in the order they were given to participants.

Question 1: What life/role transitions have you experienced?

Many of the women in the study have experienced multiple life role transitions. Life role transitions consisted of child to teenager, teenager to young women, single women to wife (partner), childless to mother, stay at home mom to working mom, working mom to caregiver, stay at home mom to caregiver, married to divorced and stay at home to college student.

Role transitions can be thrust upon us; as is the case with two women who are homemakers, married with children who suddenly were mothers to their mothers (caregivers). One participant said, "And that was a big reversal and very big...shocking. Because here's mom stomping across campus and next thing I know I'm taking care of her as my child almost." The other said, "From the moment of the phone call, I became the caregiver. When she called me and said I have cancer, my role of daughter changed to caregiver in a nanosecond."

The majority of women, who went from being a homemaker to working part or full-time, worked of necessity. For one participant who had been a homemaker for 15 years taken care of her three children and husband, work has not only been a necessity but a new lease on life:

There was a lot of arguing when I first went back to work. In fact I got told I had to quit. Okay and I said never again would I ever stop working. And its not about the money or anything its about self -gratification, working. It's about doing something, using my mind.

Two of the women introduced going back to school into their already full schedules. In order to accomplish this the women had to eventually quit working which was financially difficult. While, on the other hand, an employed, married mother of one who volunteers regularly and has been caregiver to her mother for many years, has worked practically her whole life as well as taking care of her mother who has multiple sclerosis stated: "I've been employed since I was seven years old. I've not, not had a job since I was seven."

Yet for an employed single mother of two, who recently introduced a new partner into her life, her role transition has added relief to her everyday life. The introduction of a new partner into her life as well as her children's life eased some of the burdens of doing it all alone. She stated, "It is easier because I get help, a lot of help...which I so nice. It's lightened up my load."

Women spend their days juggling these roles trying to do it all; wondering how they are going to do it all. They are stressed, exhausted, and guilt ridden; even when they find pleasure in a new role. The findings in the study highlight how women agonize over other roles when adding a new one. Most every woman discussed guilt, frustration, and feelings of inadequacy in their home life. A single mother of two that is also a college student said, "Guilty! Definitely guilty that I was not, you know, being the parent I should have been. Um, that I was

shortchanging my kids. I definitely felt guilty. I really did.”

Question 2: Thinking about your last life/role transition, in what ways did your roles change during that period?

Although women in the study took on new roles most tried to continue with their other roles as they had always done. The majority of the women still tried to accomplish as much at home as possible. It was difficult for these women to let go of things at home. One participant’s sentiment is typical of most of the women no matter which life role transition they are experiencing. Describing how going back to work affected her other roles, she stated:

I still have to take care of kids; I still have a household to run. Then I have to make time for myself to get ready and then go to work, be at work and what I have to do when I come home. So, sometimes I can come home from work at ten o’clock at night and there is still might be some laundry to take care of or a project that, um, one of the kids might have asked a little bit of help on, so I might just do those few little things just to help them. You know or maybe it’s sewing a Halloween costume or you know something that like that. There is still always something to do. So when I punch a clock I am not essentially punching out, I still have something I have to do when I get home.

Women who were caregivers expressed sadness even grief because no longer did their role as daughter exist. As a homemaker and married mother of five children, one of which has special needs, participant expressed her role change, “I became a mother to my mother.” Another women who is a

homemaker, married mother of two, community volunteer who became caregiver to her mother found her role as wife really changed:

It required me going to him (husband) way more than I had every gone, just for that moral support of I can't take this one more time. He had to change his role of, you know, not having a wife who usually complained to suddenly going okay it will be all right.

Another participant that is a single mother of two talked about how having a new partner in her life changed her role with her ex-husband. With remorse in her voice, she said, "I've lost a friend there." On a different note, a recently divorced participant said, "Actually my roles have really not changed. Um, because I handled everything while I was married."

Answers to Question 2 broke down into four themes: the particular role transition chosen for discussion by participants, the affect of the role transition on other roles, how the role transition impacted the family, and how the role transition personally affected the participant.

The women chose a diverse array of role transitions. The role transitions women chose to discuss are as follows: two women chose from being a stay at home mom to a mom working full or part-time, two women chose becoming a mother to her mother, one chose becoming a mother, one chose becoming divorced, one chose introducing a new partner, and two chose going back to school and one women chose becoming a wife.

Ways in which role transition affected other roles: change in relationship with husband, change in distribution and delegation of responsibility for

household chores (which became an extra chore in and of itself), created need for adjustment in role as caregiver, created more dependence on husband and others, gave less time for all roles, drew apart her and her ex-husband...lost a friend, affected role as mother, pulled back from a lot of stuff especially volunteering, and went from the kids being the main focus to her boyfriend.

Examples of how role transition impacted the family: affected youngest child's security, put stress on the relationships with and among siblings, there is not as much time available for husband and children, trying to set example for daughter as a role model by volunteering too, family members want more time than they are getting, there is not as much income as before, children notice lack of time available to them by mother, children had to take care of household chores, going back to school will afford husband opportunity to go back to school, children struggle with mother's absence and feel neglected, and kids have more freedom since they are no longer the total focus of mother ...which can be good.

Participants spoke of how they were personally affected by role transitions, for example: normal things did not get done especially chores, setting aside time to get things done is harder to juggle, feeling like she never punches out, going back to work out of necessity not choice, had put her desires on hold, sorrow in missing her daughter role, the role of caregiver thrust upon her, guilt...especially with youngest child, the emotional impact of a loved one with a serious condition, being a caregiver took away from other areas of life, feelings of frustration, feelings of resentment about time taken away from kids, priorities changed, no time to do the fun things anymore, feelings of being yanked/pulled in

all directions, there is no time for friends, feelings of nonexistence, the self suffers...everyone else is more important than self, don't even know who you are anymore, can't relax even when trying to eek out time for self, felling guilty, tired, exhausted and/or stressed, and is doing it all for the family.

Question 3: What was the impact your life/role transition on the way you manage your life?

When asked this question many of the participants talked about how role changes affected them personally, and how others pitched in and helped them or let them down. Women had their husbands (partners), children, friends, neighbors, and extended family help out. Women managed their lives by delegating and distributing chores among children and sending their children to babysitters or daycare. Many of the women tried to do as much as possible themselves because they did not want to burden others. Women who previously volunteered had to limit the time spent in that role. A participant with two children who recently went back to school full-time said,

I had to sort of come to terms with, I wasn't gong to do everything perfect. Things were not gonna get done. Cleaning was not going to be as meticulous as it was. I was gonna have to...the kids were gonna have to accept that I was gonna be gone, they were gonna have to do things for themselves.

Participant answers fit into four themes: role transition management, impact on the family, impact on themselves personally, no impact at all.

Participants managed their lives by the following: depending on husband and children to help out at home, babysitters, trading babysitting time with another mother to study, realizing that projects took three times longer to finish, juggling, forced organization, realizing things may not get done as thoroughly (household chores), spends more time at home when can and kids, and husband came first while parents were shifted in rank.

Some of the ways the women were affected personally: feelings of guilt about the youngest child, they put their desires on hold to fulfill duties as mother, some get angry when stressed, many felt guilt about not being there or the children having to do things for themselves, it is a challenge to get organized, struggled with time to study, and needed to come to terms with the fact that everything was not going to be perfect.

The impact on the family: could no longer do things as a family, children are forced to accept their mother's absence, the eldest child had the most responsibility, and the youngest child became insecure due to mothers absence.

Two participants' experiences were exceptions to the rule in that changing roles did not have a negative impact. For instance, one participant's life became easier because she got help from her new partner. For the other participant nothing really changed except maybe the ex-husband attempted to see the children more.

Question 4: What was the impact of your life/role transition on your expectations of other people?

The women did not have unrealistic expectations of others. As a matter of fact most just wanted a little help with household chores, taking care of the children, or receiving moral support or relief when taking care of a parent. Unfortunately, what becomes problematic is that the spouses, partners and extended family members are themselves occupying multiple roles. As for children of the participant's, they still want to be children and have a hard time adjusting to not having their mothers as available as before and being required to do more. A couple of the mothers did express their appreciation for their eldest daughters who stepped up to the plate and did more than they ever imagined.

Expectations broke down into five main themes: who participants had expectations of, the type of expectations participants had of other people, the result of unmet expectations by others, the result of expectations met by others, and the result unrelated to other's expectations. One participant had no expectations at all. Women in the study had expectations of their spouse (partner), ex-spouse, co-workers, friends, parents, extended family, siblings, children (especially the eldest), and themselves.

The following are examples of the kinds of expectations participants had of other people: help with household chores and shopping, help with the children (e.g. babysitting, transporting), the children to be more independent, encouragement, people to give as much as they did, someone to just listen when they needed to vent, and co-workers to do their part at work.

Results of expectations not met by others: women had to pick up slack from co-workers, felt disappointed and/or discouraged, tried to do it all

themselves, suffered physically mentally and spiritually,) felt drained, felt they had no support which caused bad feelings in relationships, and learned to modify expectations on the fly.

Results not related to expectations of others: the spouse (partner) is exhausted too, feelings of self-gratification, expectations of self-changed, critical of others...no one could do it well enough, had issue with people not meeting her expectations, and sometimes there are no other alternatives because family members are working or not near to physically help.

Kinds of expectations met by others: the eldest child took on home responsibilities, received moral support, and the children and husband helped more with household chores and errands.

Question 5: What is the nature of social support that you used during that transition?

For the majority of the participants relatives provided most of their social support. Examples the women gave of social support used during role transition included: friend, husband, children (especially the eldest), parent, sister, neighbor, religious faith, daycare, school, latchkey, extended family, marriage mentors and strangers.

Question 6: Can you give me an example of how you have used your social support systems during that life/role transition?

Women participants used their social support for help with children, household chores and moral support. The following are examples identified by participants as forms of social support used during life/role transitions: one or

both parents, friends, siblings, neighbors, children especially the eldest, extended family or ex-partners pitched in by watching children, providing love and support, taking the children or them places, helping with shopping, cleaning or just lending an ear, many of the participant's faith were key in getting them through difficult transitions, some had Marriage Mentors through their church to pray with and keep them on track, others used their church prayer chains as a source of support, one participant found that at her only form of social support seemed to be strangers who provided a smile or sympathetic ear, and outside sources women depended on for children were day care programs, latchkey and schools.

Question 7: What advice would you give other women going through similar life/role transitions?

When asked this questions women participants talked most about the realizations they became aware of in their life. Some of the advice given was not just about how to survive role transitions but what women should do to have a fruitful life. All but one of the participants had daughters. They're advice for them and other women is to have a life plan, secure a future for yourself first and realize you can't do it all. Eight of the women did not work outside the home for long periods at a time or not at all. Of them one who was homemaker for 15 years, mother of three and full-time employee said, "I don't think staying home is healthy. I thin you'll honestly loose your mind. You have got to exercise your brain, it's a muscle." Some of the participants talked about faith, prayer and it's importance in their life.

Four themes emerged from this question: have a life plan, what to look for when picking a life partner, ways to relieve stress, realizations made by participants.

Suggestions made by participants regarding having a life plan are: get an education, be independent, secure a career before marriage and children, and wait before having children after you are married.

Suggestions women gave when choosing a life partner: when you get married make sure your husband doesn't want a 1950's wife, discuss all aspects of your roles, never assume anything about your future partner, make sure you and your partner have common interests and make sure you know somebody more than a year before getting married or making a long term

Ways women suggest to relieve the stress in your life: exercise, take time for yourself by soaking in the tub, getting your nails done, just go to bed and don't care what the house looks like, talk to a friend, chip away a little at a time, stop and take a deep breath and say a little prayer.

Realizations made by women in the study include: you can't do it all and no one should expect you do to it all, find out what would be best for you, don't miss out on the moments in your children's life worrying about household chores, exercise your brain; it's a muscle, not every woman can be a stay at home mom, (6) get auxiliary help for your house and children, have a firm foundation of faith and pray is key, do the best you can, don't shut yourself off because things aren't perfect...enjoy people when you can, get professional help if you don't have someone close to talk too, take it day by day and tomorrow will eventually be a

better one, live by example, try and be strong, not set expectations for yourself so high because you'll drive yourself crazy, you will need to adapt and be flexible and lower your expectants, it's impossible to give 100% to everything, not to be afraid to go for it , and it's like juggling bowling balls but it gets easier.

Based on the data collected and observations of the researcher from interviews with the participants, the following analysis can be made. Role transitions can have a positive, negative, both positive and negative or no impact at all on a women's life. The question is then, what is the difference for women? Though the experiences of these women are as unique as they are; one main theme emerged that might explain why some women seem to be more content than others.

It became apparent that choice made all the difference in the world. The women who chose to go back to school, have a career, get a divorce or introduce a new partner into their life were all doing something for themselves. These new roles were a part of their plans for their future goals and dreams. Not only for themselves but their families too. Yes, these women are still get stressed or frustrated and at times feel overwhelmed but they are looking down the road; they are looking at the bigger picture, they are looking to the future. The women who were thrust into taking care of a parent or working out of necessity seemed to be much more overwhelmed by their roles. They had no choice but to go back to work to help support the family or take care of a parent. They put their dreams on hold, for now. Just dealing with the stress and demands of day-to-day life is all they can handle.

This study is limited by several factors. First, the scope of the study was small with only ten women participants. Also, the participants were selected from personal and professional acquaintances of the researcher. This may have tainted the study by biases on the part of the researcher in that he/she might have knowingly or unknowingly chosen participants with specific results in mind. Another limitation is that the study had no socio-economic or ethnic requirements. All of the women in the study were white. Interestingly for one participant in the study her husband decided to come in and listen to us. Luckily it was more toward the end of the interview. This appeared to hinder her from speaking freely. All of the above limitations may potentially limit the generalizability of the findings.

The advantage of using open-ended questions is it allowed the researcher to collect data on multiple role transitions based on the participant's point of view. Though participants did not always answer the questions directly, their answers guided the direction of the findings. It is possible the researcher's familiarity with the participants put them at ease allowing them to discuss their lives openly. This enriches the data collected. Furthermore, the age range selected for the study supported the idea that women ages of 35 -55 have experienced multiple role transitions.

The goal of this study is to give women the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences. Thus providing a better understanding of the complexities of being a woman with multiple roles and how to navigate through role transition was accomplished. Women openly shared how multiple role transition affected

their other roles, impacted their management of life, impacted their expectations of other people, the nature of social support they received, how they used their social support systems and give advice for women experiencing role transitions.

The impression today is that women can do it all. A single mother of two and full-time student said, "I think the message is out there, is that women, you can do it all. You can have a career, you can be a full-time mother, you can do everything. You can volunteer, you can do all this stuff but stuff suffers." This study shows that women try and do it all. Even when they know they are suffering physically, mentally and spiritually. The hope is that this study will provide relevant information for women of all ages on multiple role transition.